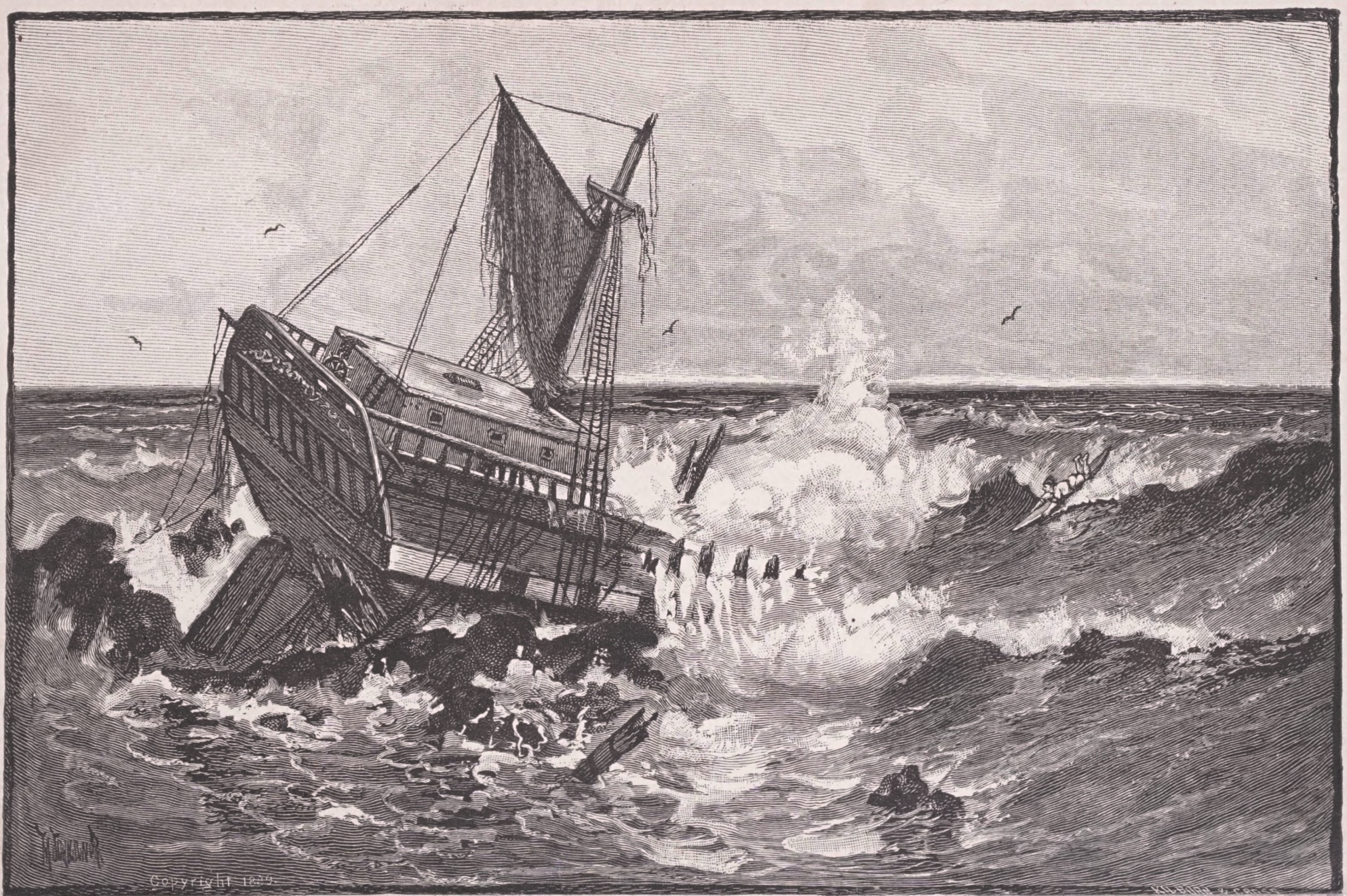

THE FLEETWING SERIES

V. 3

THE WRECK OF THE GREYHOUND

OR

THE ROMANTIC LOVE OF THE EARL'S DAUGHTER

BY

C. M. NEWELL,

AUTHOR OF "THE VOYAGE OF THE FLEETWING," "THE ISLE OF PALMS," ETC.

40

All wrecked on Pratas
Lies the ship which bore St. Clare!
All stranded lies — death-laden;
All wrecked, the Earl and maiden;
The crew strewn everywhere!
Tangled in weeds and breakers
The maid lies dead on Pratas!

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INSCRIBED TO THE PRESENT

Lady Lucia,

THIRD DAUGHTER OF THE HEROINE, WHO GRACIOUSLY FURNISHED MANY FACTS IN THIS VOLUME.

THE AUTHOR.

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THE WRECK OF THE GREYHOUND.

CHAPTER I.

THE PALACE OF THIEVES.

NESTLED like an eagle's eyrie upon the most beetling crag which towers above Hong Kong bay rises the sumptuous abode of the British Embassy, about which cling numerous dark legends and abundant romantic history. It is by far the most picturesque landmark that greets the maritime comer, whether approaching from the east through the narrow Ly-Moon pass, or coming by the Lamma Channel around the west end of the island.

But an onlooker viewing it from Kow-Loon point — over across the bay — obtains much the best view of the embassy when seen outlined against the dark background of corrugated rocks on Victoria Peak, for it then appears like some grand old castellated pile of mediæval Spain.

It was such an eerie, isolated stronghold as the marauding Portuguese were accustomed to build during the sixteenth century, — copied from the Moorish castles of their sister kingdom, — a period of misrule in China, when these exploring freebooters held possession of the

rich tea-city of Macao, and other adjacent seacoast shelters suitable for their piratical ships when evading pursuit.

The "Palace of Thieves," as the early English settlers rightfully termed the stone-built edifice on the cliff, — strangely forgetful of the equally just censure given by the Portuguese to the rascally English opium-smugglers, — was built during the warlike reign of the Emperor Keen-Lung, whose vast armies were then so occupied with capturing Turkestan and invading British India, that his home-provinces were bereft of good government, from lack of military power and dominant-minded rulers.

It was a time when the river and sea pirates swayed all the coast-provinces of Cathay with a ruthless hand. So dissolute a period that the pious Portuguese aptly named Hong Kong and the adjacent islands the "Ladrones," meaning the Place of Thieves. This cognomen so annoyed the sampan boatmen of the bay, — of whom there were twelve thousand living with their families in boats, — that they stigmatized the strong stone house on the precipice as "Chin-Chin Ladrone," — bow to the thief. A nickname which applied in some sense, as it certainly went hard with the small local pirates who did not *kow-tow* — bow down — and pay tribute to the Portuguese freebooters.

Desperate as were those degenerate days, yet it was not until 1795, during the more dissolute reign of Kea-King — son of the great war emperor — that the vast bands of organized river and coast pirates became sufficiently strong to hold all the war-fleets of the empire at

bay; while every town of thrift and plenty that could be reached by river or sea was compelled to pay tribute, or be sacked at the pleasure of any petty chief.

Such an inconceivable display of marauding power became a continual menace to good government throughout the coast. Fortunately for the land rulers, the providential death of Ching-Che-tung, the admiral of all the coast pirates, was at that time brought about by treachery. This event created internal dissensions among the jealous commanders of the fleet, and the pirates about Hong Kong began to war upon each other for supremacy; the winning side having been greatly aided by the Portuguese freebooters of the Ladrone Palace.

At this interesting juncture of a predatory reign, the vanquished minority of sea-robbers began to accept high offices of trust and emolument, which were eagerly proffered by the effeminate emperor, as the only means of controlling the affairs of the empire. By the aid of these turncoat pirates the governing mandarins of the southern coast-provinces were once more enabled to protect their rich river cities and opulent coast towns, so long subjected to the raids for rapine and pelf by the ferocious sea-wolves.

Not so with the eastern coast-provinces, from Amoy to Shanghai, and northward to Pekin; a sea district still under the piratical sway of Koxinga, son of Admiral Ching-Che-tung, and a naval commander of even greater renown than his father. Koxinga had long since made himself king of the fertile island of Formosa. Select-

ing the strongly fortified harbor of Tan-Suy as a rendezvous for his fleets, the pirate king expelled the Dutch settlers from the thrifty city of Ke-Lung, and made the whole northern part of Formosa an elysium for his pirate hordes.

We have purposely strayed from our legitimate theme to truthfully portray the evil times when the present embassy was built by the robber Dons; showing why such a strong edifice was required for safety at a period when powerless rulers had lost all control over a portion of their base-minded subjects.

Not satisfied with perching the quaint old dormitory upon the very brink of the overhanging cliff, two hundred feet above the restless rush of tidal water below, the daring builder also flung out a ten-foot balcony from the level of the second-story windows, which was roofed in above by the long slant overhang of the main roof. This balcony was strongly balustered throughout its front and sides with stout posts and railing of camphor-wood. While the ends of the balcony were closely latticed, large occasional apertures were left along the water-front, from which an occupant could lean out over the balustrade and peer down the sheer sides of the jagged precipice till he became dizzy with the rapid whirl of water below.

The whole affair was needlessly ornamented with delicate filigree and flimsy fretwork, much more after the ornate manner of the Orientals than comported with the original design of its robber Dons. This notable discrepancy led an observing eye and thoughtful mind to determine that the present decorations were an

unseemly acquisition adopted long subsequent to the building of the Gothic-looking structure.

Whatever may have been the design of the builder, both the overhanging roof and the balcony itself were risky ventures in a typhoon country, where the winds, when put to their best, frequently lift a whole roof and send it ballooning over the bay. But one only needs to know the temper of the times and character of the men of that day to determine that it was built for a lookout. A place from which to spy upon the numerous junks, piratical fast-boats and countless sampans, ever sheltered along the inner curve of the harbor. A sharp eye can extend its gaze almost to the Ly-Moon pass; and a ship discloses itself even to a dull eye when abreast of Devil's Peak. While a craft of any kind coming from Macao, Wampoa, or Canton, is seen the instant she doubles around the west end of the island.

Though the balcony is now sumptuously fitted up with luxurious divans and lounging-chairs, swaying hammocks and enticing bamboo reclines, with its back wall hung with rare paintings and its roof festooned with flowering vines, with numerous ornamental shrubs and dwarfed fruit-bearing trees potted in rich vases of stone-china, nestled in each corner and about every aperture, — yet, alas! this seductive conservatory has had a tragic era, which makes one shudder to contemplate.

Though now the beautiful balcony makes a charming place for the reception of daily callers — a custom with foreign residents in the Flowery Kingdom — it has been the scene of many a bloodthirsty act, for more than one person — some arrogant mandarin or usurious Jew —

has been cast headlong down its dizzy height. In one instance the doomed victim fell on the deck of a passing sampan, whose sail broke the fall of the lordly mandarin. Being in the night, he escaped in the darkness and lived to make the boatman wealthy; and snatched him away from his toilsome life, fearing lest the greedy wants of the man of low degree might tempt him to disclose to the Portuguese pirates the miraculous escape of their victim.

Alas!—who knows?—perhaps its tempting location may have served to create an unholy incentive to employ it for, possibly, just the purpose for which it was constructed. Certain it is that a tragic attempt of the kind was recently made, not a score of years prior to the date of our story. So that none but the mildest-mannered of men should venture to live in such an abode, lest he be assailed by some cruel predilection of crime, whenever an enemy comes within his grasp.

Since those long-gone days of evil doings which we have slightly touched upon, the Palace of Thieves has been in possession of several notable British ambassadors. The place was first occupied for such purpose by Lord Macartney's embassy in 1789. After having perfected his treaty with the Emperor at Pekin, in the name of George III., his Lordship came to Hong Kong with his fleet, and endeavored to benefit trade regulations with Canton.

During the long peaceful interval which followed, several less notable dignitaries resided at the palatial old mansion. But in 1816 the old difficulties began to arise. The English merchants were being brutally

treated, and Lord Amherst was sent to Pekin to adjust matters. But even after his Lordship arrived at the imperial palace, as he then refused to perform Kow-tow before his Majesty, he was sent away empty-handed, without even an interview. He too returned to Hong Kong with his fleet and took up his residence at the Ladrone Palace.

In 1834, when the charter of the East India Company expired, Lord Napier was sent out from England, and while residing at Hong Kong undertook to handle the task which was daily growing more difficult to deal with. His Lordship was finally taken sick with fever, and died at Macao.

The British government next offered the embassy to George Seymour, the Earl of St. Clare, who, aggrieved at the loss of his countess, had been travelling in India for three years with his young daughter. Lord Seymour chanced to be at Hong Kong at the time, on a visit to his brother, Sir Michael Seymour, vice-admiral of the British fleet stationed there.

The Earl undertook to negotiate better trade privileges with the Canton government, and he succeeded admirably for the time. But it was not many years before Captain Elliot, the superintendent of trade at Canton, was compelled to give up twenty thousand chests of opium, which were destroyed in the presence of Lin, the provincial Governor. This infringement of trade served to bring on the war of 1840, when Chusan, the stronghold lying off Shanghai, and the Bogue Forts near Canton were captured. Hong Kong was ceded to England, together with an indemnity of six million dollars.

It was during Lord Seymour's residence at the Ladrone Palace that the tragic and romantic incident took place which we are about to relate. The establishment was then presided over by the earl's daughter, the most beautiful girl in the English peerage. The terrible experience which the girl endured at that time greatly endeared her to the people of Victoria, and served to increase the popular interest in the romantic old embassy.

CHAPTER II.

FAIR LUCIA SEYMOUR.

OUR story opens at the earliest dawn-light of a bright spring day, in the far-away "flowery kingdom" of Kitai, or Cathay, as China had been termed by the people of mediæval Europe from their earliest knowledge of the empire.

Early as it was, many an adoring eye among the officers having the deck-watch on the naval vessels had long been watching the skyward balcony of the Ladrone Palace, seeking the usual morning vision which appeared with great regularity at dawn on all pleasant days. Not over-long had the impatient devotees of Eros to wait ere a young girl burst into view, and was seen leaning far out from one of the vine-clad apertures of her lofty eyrie. Standing thus for a moment with her arms outstretched to the western sky, as if greeting some spirit-faced Celestial among the stars, she at length kneeled upon a cushioned seat of the balcony, with her small white hands clasped upon her breast, and her head raised in attitude of prayer, like one forgetful of all else while thus occupied with her morning devotions: looking the pure, sweet maiden that she was reputed to be.

It was fair Lucia Seymour, daughter of the Earl of St. Clare, and the pet niece of Sir Michael Seymour,

admiral of the fleet. She had come forth upon the flower-laden balcony, as was her wont, to indulge in her morning orisons. Brief were the glances that she gave to the slumbering bay beneath, or bestowed upon the dawn-touched mountain which enclosed the opposite coast of Kow-Loon in the east. Yet long and reverently did the devout girl gaze upward into the glimmering faces of the few lingering stars still seen twinkling in the western sky. Might it not be that the laggard stars had lingered for a glimpse of the sweet-faced maiden, just awakened from her couch, fresh and pure, who had turned to seek her saintly mother in the blue ether, whose angel face she knew was peering earthward upon her child during this antelucan hour?

It was the anniversary of a memorable dawn-hour in dear old England, when the countess died four sad years before. Dying, she had bidden her broken-hearted child to be comforted, and promised that she would watch over her in spirit from the higher balcony of heaven, ever ready to listen to her childish confessions to the All-Wise, whose loving ear would surely bend to her just petitions and accept her heartfelt praise.

Lady Lucia was a young English blonde, with gray-blue eyes, fair hair, and a small girlish face sweet as a spring blossom fresh with April dews. She had the slim, lithe, graceful figure of a girl still lingering in the full-sheaved autumn of her teens. Nineteen years is an age when a maiden's glances daily grow more tender and sympathetic, and her voice more melodious, whether she addresses a pet bird or appeals with holy invocations to a star. What a bewitching riddle a girl then becomes

to herself! What an enigma to her dull-eyed friends! It is the evolution of womanhood, when the soul acquires breadth, depth, and spirituality; and the rhythmical emotions of the heart become a daily surprise, so tuneful, tender, and far-reaching are its yearnings for companionship with one of her kind.

Coming fresh from her couch, Lucia was daintily attired in a morning negligee of some soft orange-colored fabric, its texture slightly veined with red, as if the dainty vesture had caught its rich creamy yellow from the orient sky. Her rich brown hair remained undressed and unbound, and fell in silky masses about her lissome form with all the freedom of a wind-blown waterfall. A soft, serene halo flitted about the girl's head, a singular reflection from the fast increasing dawn-light, until she appeared to the adoring onlookers of the far-down bay like a pure white soul standing in a choir of angels, and joining in their melodious invocations to the Most High; as Lucia always ended her devotions by singing a touching hymn, once sung at the deathbed of her mother.

Not much attention had the devout girl bestowed upon the attractive bird's-eye view of Hong Kong bay, with its mixed fleets of English and French naval vessels, sentineled by the glittering bayonets of the marine guards seen pacing the bows and quarters of the great warships. Nor yet had she deigned to glance at the numerous junks, or smuggling fast-boats, dangerous craft pierced for fifty oars and carrying a central row of cannon, together with countless sampans, all nestled along the shore like a vast covey of sea-birds slumbering in the bronze waters of the bay.

But now came the long rumbling roar of the gun-fire from the great line-of-battle ship, echoing and re-echoing back and forth from the cliff to Kow-Loon point. Ere the concussion of the cannon had ceased to be felt upon the girl's cheek, one of the marine bands struck up a spirit-stirring strain of martial music, — a tumultuous greeting to the rising sun. The din of the cannon and the resonant bugle-call, one or both, broke rudely in upon the sweet revery of the maiden on the balcony, until she at length gave somewhat of her attention to the charming marine picture spread far and wide beneath her gaze.

A novel transition now took place before the courtly young officers of the fleet, many of whom were of noble birth and had *entrée* at the embassy. The nun-like devotee, whom they had spied upon at her worship during the past hour, suddenly became transformed into an exultant, peerless beauty. The observant and joyous girl now stood with proudly poised head, dilated nostrils, and beaming eyes, noting everything that transpired over all the hyaline waters of the bay.

After nearly a full hour of cheering martial music the band played the usual finale, God Save the Queen. The sweet home-loving air came grateful as a benediction over the intervening waters, reverberating strangely among the jagged rocks of the cliff, producing a weird accompaniment of quivering echoes that thrilled the young girl with delight.

As the last plaintive strain of the loved national hymn came welling up to the balcony, a venerable nobleman stepped out from an adjoining chamber and came nimbly

forward with pleasant stateliness to greet his daughter. The new-comer was the courtly old Earl of St. Clare, between whom and Lucia there existed a charming degree of companionship rarely witnessed between such extremes of age. The Earl ended his paternal salutation by suggesting to his daughter:

"Lucia, dear, you had better let Irene order our coffee served out here this morning. Let Chung Wah bring on the lunch at once, as I have early work to accomplish in perfecting my despatches."

"Yes, papa, presently. Isn't it a clear, delicious morning? What with the blossoms in the garden, the saline breeze sweeping up from the sea, and the gorgeous sunrise over yonder mountains, it has impressed your little daughter more than usual, and I would have you give just one moment to the sweet influence before any one is permitted to intrude upon us."

"It is indeed a soul-filling picture, my daughter; peaceful, beautiful, charming! It seems less hazy than usual along the coast and over the landscape, and what mist there is is hastening to the sea, fleeing like an army of ghosts before the golden lance-thrusts of the sun. It is lovely, but I must be up and doing. I designed to take the American steamer up to Canton to-day, but that plan has been interfered with by some late despatches sent last night by Sir Michael."

"Was my uncle here, himself, last night?" queried the girl, when she returned from ordering the morning lunch.

"No, my dear; he sent me word by his Flag Lieutenant. My Lord Hertford importuned me to let him see you.

But it was late, and, considering how little you are pleased with the company of your cousin, I persuaded him that his request was untimely."

"Oh, thanks! you dear, good papa. You deserve to be smothered in kisses for your very judicious management of my insipid cousin Hertford."

"And yet I stand here wondering when I am to be remunerated for my nice diplomacy."

Instantly two dimpled little hands seized the long white whiskers of the old nobleman, and a pair of rosebud lips began to pay the Earl in the required coin, promptly on demand, renewing her thanks in a most melodious voice, full of fun and affection, as soon as she could get her breath, —

"Pa, that foppish fellow importunes me with his silliness more than I can bear. No person so blind as one who, having eyes, will not see. None so difficult to teach the thorough disesteem which we have for him as one who deems himself gifted with the wisdom of Solomon and the beauty of Apollo Belvedere," and the impetuous girl leaned her head coquettishly against her father's shoulder as if bent upon enlisting him in her cause.

"Well, my child, Hertford is to you but one of the countless trifling ills of life. Petty annoyances bestowed by the divine Father to inculcate patience and forbearance toward our fellow-men. Remember, Lucia, to accept the importunities of your cousin as the needed school in which to acquire graciousness, — well knowing that the native arrogance of the Seymours of Moorland Castle needs to be softened, else so many of our

family would not have come to the block in centuries back."

"But, papa, most of our grand old progenitors were beheaded without due cause, you will admit?"

"And some of them, my child, escaped such a fate who well deserved it. The rightly called 'Proud Duke of Somerset' was one of them, in the time of James II. Though I cannot but admit that Edward Seymour, Duke of Somerset, was wrongfully beheaded, not so with his brother, the treacherous admiral. But they lived during boisterous times. Their sister, Jane Seymour, being queen to Henry VIII., brought the duke dangerously near to the throne; for, as the king loaded him with favors, many another noble became jealous of his greatness. When, after the king's death, he was made Protector of England and guardian of his nephew, Edward VI., then the crafty Earl of Warwick, aided by the duke's brother, fastened a false charge of treason upon him, and he was beheaded."

"What a vile wretch the admiral must have been, to thus help to pull down the great head of his house, one who had become the first peer in the land. What possessed that man to do it?"

"Thomas Seymour, the lord high admiral, was as jealous of the duke as the worst of his enemies. Thomas had married Catherine Parr, one of the late king's widows. When she died, the admiral became the suitor of Princess Elizabeth. By supplanting the Protector, the base brother hoped to further his suit with the princess. But when Thomas had helped Warwick to destroy the good duke, then the treacherous earl

turned upon the lord admiral, and easily brought him to the block, and he deserved his fate."

"But those nobles lived far back previous to the reigns of 1552. Tell me, pa, did not the Seymours become more tractable subjects to the king by such examples?"

"Not much to boast of. More than one hundred years since the Protector's time, another Edward Seymour, Duke of Somerset, great-grandson of the first, mortally offended James I. by secretly marrying the king's cousin, Arabella Stuart. For this she was imprisoned in the Tower, became insane, and died from grief; while the arrogant duke came very near being brought to the block."

"Thank the Lord, papa, that there is no such arbitrary penalty overhanging the hereditary temperament of the Seymours of our time. And truly, pa, your little daughter needs no such terrible menace as the block or the Tower to induce her to become a meek little citizen of Victoria's reign."

"Well said, my girl. But how would it be if our good queen should give you a fair choice between Lord Hertford and the Tower, — what then?" The graceful creature towered to her utmost height, clenching her tiny fist as if it grasped a battle-axe, and never did blue eyes flash such gleams of defiance as Lucia's meek little orbs, as she replied, —

"Even the block, papa, in preference to my insipid cousin Hertford. Ay, even that odious billet of wood upon which our great nobles died, and where beautiful Jane Grey and Lord Dudley gave up their newly wedded lives, soon after."

In answer to his high-spirited daughter, the aged Earl held out his arms to his child, and with tearful eyes took the proud and beautiful creature to his breast, having demonstrated to the satisfacton of them both that the spirit of justice and liberty was as much a heredity of the Seymours now as of yore. The long past history of the family had been a proud, albeit a sad one, and a discussion of the injustice done to their great ancestors was ever a sorrowful topic for the present recipients of the name.

CHAPTER III.

THE BEAUTIFUL CLIPPER.

A LIGHT lacquerware table, containing the morning lunch, was now wheeled up to the balustrade where the Earl stood, and father and daughter seated themselves at the sunrise repast in a subdued and tender mood. Lady Lucia sat facing the east, where she could look far away in a seaward direction nearly to the Ly-Moon pass. Suddenly the girl's face lighted with a flush of delight, as she exclaimed, —

"Oh, look! papa, see that beautiful clipper vessel. How like a bird on the wing she comes dashing down the bay. She approaches North Head as fleet as a race-horse."

"Rather a small ship. She is a round-sterned craft, beautifully curved at the bows, and carries herself as gracefully as a gull. The trim set of her sails, her fleetness of foot, and the wonderful symmetry of everything about her, serve to impart a sense of her conscious pride."

"So they do, papa. How jauntily she carries that tiny skysail. And what a pretty flag of red and blue she has fluttering above the sail. O my! how she careens to those strong puffs blowing down from the gullies; the squalls make her curvet like a war-horse."

"The sunlight is just bursting over the hill-tops, and

makes a pretty effect where it gilds the tops of the royals to the color of gold."

"An able artist might sketch a spirited marine. What a pity it should be lost! Note the strong relief imparted to the white-sailed ship seen against the dark background of Devil's Peak. The hills rimmed with sunlight, and the waters about the ship in such deep shadow that the foam about her bow gleams with a ghostly whiteness."

"Lucia, it is truly a fine picture for you to impress upon your mind, and paint at your leisure for the gallery at Moorland Castle."

"You are just expressing my own thought, papa. I am noting all the striking points of interest, and hope to secure some of the chief values of the scene."

"See, my child, now, while the vessel swerves from her course, is not the flag at her peak flying at half-mast?"

"Truly, you are right, papa. Death has been aboard of the beautiful vessel, just as he invades our loved homes on the land."

"Yes, my precious child. 'In the midst of life we are in death!' Why, she is an American, with her Union of stars and stripes."

A shadow stole swiftly over the animated faces of parent and child, and hot tears flooded their eyes. Theirs was a household wherein Death had presided more than once in the past decade, draping their manorial arms in the attributes of woe. On this account the earl had been admonished to take this last scion of a long line of nobles abroad; hoping by the attrition

of travel and an ever-changing scene to disabuse his daughter's mind of her ever-present grief, and in a measure heal the terrible heart-wound caused by the loss of her mother.

"Oh, papa, how strange it is that the mere position of the ship's beautiful flag should cast a gloom over our joy. — Irene, run and bring the field-glass for his Lordship, and fetch my largest lorgnette."

Irene brought the glasses. In a moment the Earl and Lucia were busily occupied inspecting everything on board the attractive stranger. Presently both of the observers exclaimed in a breath, "Fleetwing!" — slowly spelling out the word, blue-lettered on a field of red, upon the colors flying from the main-truck. Father and daughter laid aside their glasses, and sounded over the pretty name as if it pleased them, and both turned to their lunch with a sigh of relief.

"Isn't that an appropriate name for the dainty vessel?"

"Yes, my child, and it has a pleasing sound. Ah, there is a boat just leaving the flagship, and I think it is pulling to intercept the new-comer."

"So there is, papa. And there's Uncle Seymour himself on the poop-deck. He is evidently questioning the quartermaster about the vessel which has so awakened our interest."

And the two sipped their coffee in silence, and nibbled their crisp slices of graham toast with small show of appetite. Imbued in thought, they watched the Fleetwing come dashing down past Kellet's Island, jetting a small bur-wave from her sharp cutwater, but with never a bubble of foam seen in her wake. Breaking the si-

lence, — the pensive mood of two over-full hearts, — Lucia called upon the servant behind her father's chair, her maid being absent, —

"More coffee, Chung Wah. Papa, won't you have your cup replenished upon this occasion?"

"No, my daughter. I thought you rarely duplicated your morning cup."

"Not often, but this delicious Minnehassa seems the best ever shipped from Ceylon. For some reason I crave it this morning more than usual. Something about this beautiful ship's appearance in our midst, with a death flag at her gaff — a crape on her door, as it were — has awakened my sympathy and created a world of interest for those on board. Why, papa, I feel like taking wing and flying to the succor of the grief stricken ones on board of her."

"I can understand your feelings, Lucia. I, too, take an unaccountable interest in the vessel, thus appearing in our midst when everything in Nature is bright and joyous. Yet, darling, tidings of death are most common to this port, between the doings of the pirates and the malarious river." Lucia interrupted her father by exclaiming, —

"There goes the harbor-master's boat. The cutter from the flagship and two fleet whaleboats have just boarded the Fleetwing. See how she swerves from her course, papa. Why, look, she is heading over toward Kow-Loon point."

"Yes, dear; she is evidently coming to anchor near the admiral's ship. She heads away to obtain room to swing around into the wind."

"The sailors are taking in the light sails, preparing to anchor."

"And down go her jibs. How plainly we can hear the hanks rattle on the tarred stays. The jibs are so embayed behind the topsails that they run down with a rush."

"Look, papa, up they clew her topsails, all but the mizzen. How singular she looks in her undress, nothing on but the spanker and her hind topsail."

"Yes, odd enough. They are preparing to anchor. See the man at the port ring-stopper, while the mate stands on the bow ready to give the order."

"Oh, papa, 'ring-stopper' beats all of my nautical phrases. How came you by that novel sea term?"

"Why, dear, a love for the sea and all that pertains to it is our family birthright. Nearly every generation of Seymours has boasted an admiral, and I am sure even you have imbibed a surfeit of sea phrases from Sir Michael."

"True enough, papa, but I have missed uncle's lesson about ring-stopper. Now what is the Fleetwing doing? I wonder if she will drop anchor for a 'flying-moor,' as uncle terms it."

"I think not. That is a reckless way of anchoring. Judging by the care and precision in which her nautical evolutions are done, the officers of the Fleetwing are too care-taking to make 'flying-moors.' That is a method adapted to emergencies; it tears the copper, nags the cutwater, and sometimes parts the cable."

"Oh, I only hoped to catch you with my cute sea term, papa; but I got well instructed instead. Look at

her now, swinging in a circle till she heads back toward the Ly-Moon. See the pretty creature prance about now that she heads the wind and tide. Why does n't she drop her anchor, papa?"

"Because, dear, she is still forging ahead. To anchor now would risk fouling the cable by drifting back over the fluke of the anchor."

"What a clatter her chain makes, reverberating against the cliff. She is clewing up the topsail and brailing the spanker. Lucia, dear, I don't think that I have ever been quite so much interested in a strange vessel before."

"Nor I, papa. If I were the least superstitious I could not but believe that we are in some way to be connected with the Fleetwing. Perhaps we shall go to England in her."

"No, Lucia, I have already decided to take passage in the Greyhound."

"Oh, papa, true as you live there is a great fluttering at my heart, which is in some way caused by that vessel."

"It is a singular tradition in human experience that we often find ourselves strongly impressed by inanimate things. It seems as if yonder ship was possessed of a sentient soul with which to arouse our sympathies, without our reason being called to participate in the least. It was not wholly the colors at half-mast, for we were thoroughly interested before we discovered the death-flag. Intuition pertains more to the mental quality of women than men. Yet many of the finest intellects that I have known were gifted with this feminality.

Thus I have made it a rule to give heed to a persistent intuition when it directs me to my fellow-men."

"Dear papa, you have unriddled many of my own conjectures about the Fleetwing, though I am not quite prepared to unravel my own witches'-weavings until I have subjected them to greater introspection. How often you and I have found ourselves a unity of sympathy in past years. Tell me, papa, was my dear mother so impressible to everything about her?"

"Yes, little daughter, you are the Countess yearly given back to me in more complete miniature," and the affectionate father drew his child lovingly to his side and they sat in silent reflection, until the Earl discovered the admiral in his gig about to board the Fleetwing, which again drew their attention to the ship.

"What can it all mean, papa?"

"I'm sure I can't tell. Something of unusual importance, however, for Sir Michael is much too fat and bulky to be willing to climb a vessel's side, by man-ropes, on any ordinary occasion."

"There are two others in the boat with uncle. Who can they be? The glass, Irene," and Lucia sought a position where she could closely inspect the officers in the boat. "Oh, I can make out Captain Walsh, the flag-captain, and McDonald, the fleet-surgeon. How the mystery deepens, papa."

"Yes, dear, and we must make an effort to learn what's going on. Chung Wah, go down to Rawl and Drinker's. My compliments to Captain Drinker, and ask him for the earliest intelligence from the ship Fleetwing, just arrived."

"Yis, mi Lor', mi sabe Mellican mane, Drinker," and the coolie departed in haste, as his curiosity was as much aroused as his master's.

"Lucia, I must leave the new-comer to you. I have despatches to send Governor Lin at Canton, and must then make ready to give audience to the Spanish official from Manila."

"Well, papa, I must confess that I am too much fascinated by this mystery to leave the balcony. I shall let Irene dress my hair right here, where I can watch further developments in the bay."

CHAPTER IV.

LADY LUCIA'S VISION.

HOW often in life the intuitive mind is thus impressed by the approach of unseen events, — such dim shadowy apparitions as confront us in dreams, having less substance than the scurrying mists seen a-wing in the far-down valleys, hastening seaward before the pursuing warmth of the morning sun.

When Lady Lucia was left to herself, the visionary girl recalled something that transpired during the previous evening, while kneeling at prayer. After thanking her Heavenly Father for the daily blessings vouchsafed to her, she made a girl-like appeal to her long-lost mother, confessing a newly awakened wish for the companionship of one of her own age, some one to love her with the abounding affection of her sainted parent in the sky.

In the midst of her appeal to the spiritual face ever present during her devotions, the girl was startled by a preternatural appearance which slowly traced itself out to her full apprehension among the stars. A just distinguishable face seen bending lovingly over her, irradiated by a never-to-be-forgotten expression of endearment, a soulful look which answered to her new-born aspiration as a draught of water ministers to the insane thirst of a desert traveler. She did not apprehend at the time

that the ghostly apparition was the real prescience of a coming event, though the illusion was as palpable to her mental eye as the breath on a mirror, and it vanished as quickly in the same eerie manner.

However common such natural appeals may be to other maidens, grown impatient of their lot, girls athirst and enhungered for the one God-given heritage promised to woman, this occasion was the first recorded outburst of Lucia's ardent, affectionate nature.

Doubtless even the rare-minded Lucia had from time to time mentally limned a visionary semblance of the dear one she could adore: now modeling a strong indwelling conviction of beauty, expunging many an inadmissible feature; girl-like, selecting a surfeit of noble qualities, and rejecting every piece of base metal with a perceptible curl of the twin rose-buds about her mouth.

Reviewing the notable event in the silence of her chamber, after Irene had retired, was not found conducive to restful slumber. Lucia dreamed of the visionary face seen in the sky, and also of a full-sailed ship sailing proudly over the sea, as graceful as a strong-winged bird. When the vessel was just vanishing over the far horizon, lo! she discovered that her new-found ideal was aboard, and was wafting to her a familiar farewell.

She awoke at early dawn, and went out on the balcony for her morning devotions, feeling for the first time in her life an unaccountable sense of unrest, such as fails not to come in the young lives of all — a period when girls begin their first earnest outlook for some ideal counterpart of their pure selves. The singular apparition of the previous night had got wofully entangled

with the dream-ship, and both events dwelt inseparably in her mind.

Well might the heart of this high-born maiden beat wild and fast when, in company with her father, she discovered her mystic dream-ship in the beautiful Fleetwing. As the new-comer came bursting forth from out the crimson dawn-sky, so had the visionary vessel burst upon the dreamer from an illuminated battle-cloud on the sea.

"What next?" was the question propounded by every pulse-beat of her heart. "What if the remaining part of the supernatural event should also transpire?" And the girl's heart stood a-tiptoe, awaiting an answer from the inscrutable Fates.

Was the dim archetype which Lucia's truant heart had limned on the sky about to confront her with a living prototype of what she desired? Some one to love her without constant laudation of her charms. One of nature's noblemen, not schooled in insipid flattery, and who would esteem her for some essential qualities of heart and mind. How gladly could she accept the adulation of such a being. That such a one somewhere existed, and in due time would come forth and claim his own, had now become the supreme conviction of her turbulent young heart.

. . . . .

Not until hours after Chung Wah had been sent away in search of news was there anything learned about the Fleetwing. While the family were at breakfast, the coolie appeared in a state of great trepidation, evidently the bearer of stirring news.

"Well, Chung Wah, stop bowing and scraping and tell us your news, at once," exclaimed the Earl, as the obsequious Celestial became more ceremonious as the importance of his message dawned upon him.

"Mi Lor', Mellican mane he bin muche fighte pirate. Pirate mane fighte he, kille too muche Mellican mane. Mellican mane kille too muche Chinee mane. Him kille Ching Along, too muche big mandarin; chope-chope he top-side off. Ching Along most kille Mellican cap'in, when him no have got head on top-side, to make see Mellican mane. No more mi can tell, mi Lor'."

"Who told you all this, Chung Wah?"

"Mellican mane, Cap'in Drinker. Him speake mi; 'walke walke, go quicke make speake mi Lor.'"

The sum of the coolie's story, told in pigeon English, was, that the Fleetwing had been in a terrible battle with the pirates, in which Ching Along, the terror of the China seas, had been killed. The American captain had been nearly killed by the pirate chief, after his head was fairly chopped off.

As the effect of this news was to abate further appetite for breakfast, the Earl rose and led the way out to the balcony. There it was discovered that Admiral Seymour had left the Fleetwing, after a prolonged visit, and, after leaving Captain Walsh aboard the Invincible, was now pulling in the direction of the embassy, meaning to land at the Cliff-Stair, and report the events of the morning to the Earl.

Such an early visit from Sir Michael went far to confirm Chung Wah's strange story. Standing lovingly together in one of the eastern apertures, father and

daughter watched the approaching boat pulling along the shore, the portly coxswain cautiously threading his way in and out among the sampans, until the Admiral was near enough to exchange salutations with his friends on the cliff.

Lady Lucia waved her handkerchief to her jolly old uncle, who lifted his cocked hat with a deal of courtliness to the Earl, and with much mock gallantry kissed his gloved hand to his pet niece, who hung from the balcony daintily as a sea-bird poised in air.

After watching the boat pull to the landing, where Sir Michael got out, and allowing ten minutes for the old sailor to tug his aldermanic proportions up three hundred steps cut through the damp cleft in the rocks, father and daughter sauntered leisurely through the hall to the head of the broad stair, and there awaited the Admiral's appearance.

He came at length, toiling up the easy ascent as if he were scaling a castle, puffing like a porpoise, as he extended a hand to each of his friends, hands that might well have done service for a whale's pectoral fins. The joyous greeting over, the still breathless seaman was ushered through the hall to the balcony, where one of the two large seats belonging to the palace was kept for his special use.

During the passage through the hall the old tar was escorted wing-and-wing, with the usual hilarious ceremony; the aged Earl locked arms on one side, and the Admiral's favorite lassie tugged away at her uncle's elephantine proportions on the other wing.

When at length Sir Michael was fairly brought to

anchor in the only visible chair capacious enough to hold him, and had recovered his breath and gulped down a glass of sparkling Moselle, with a stentorian smack of the lips in generous commendation of the wine especially selected for his use, he then launched out with his budget of news, with the rare zest of an old sailor-gossip — the prince of ubiquitous news-venders.

"St. Clare, it was the finest piece of hand-to-hand work, in repelling boarders, upon the whole record of piratical warfare." And, assuming the important air of one having a mighty topic to discuss, he banged his colossal fist upon the balustrade until the whole edifice shook as from an earthquake. "I tell you, George, there's a deal to learn in the cunning artifice of some of these accidental combats."

"Oh, uncle, spare us a total wreck upon this memorable occasion. One more such blow and the whole flimsy structure will tumble about our ears."

"Lucia, if there's a wee lassie we wot of, who has an extra buss to offer her uncle, I'll spare my hand." And his huge sides shook with laughter, which vibrated the balcony almost as much as his blow.

"It's a bargain, you precious uncle, though you have already had your due allowance."

"Mebby so, but after a great battle there's an extra 'splicing of the main brace,' a judicious example for a girl to follow." And the jolly seaman placed his arms akimbo, and careened his head aport, awaiting the tribute upon which the safety of the structure depended.

"By St. George of England, Lucia, those kisses were rightly administered."

"You survive it well. Now, uncle, do get on with your story about the Fleetwing."

"Ay, ay, you pretty midget, I'll warrant that you were out of your berth an hour earlier than usual to glean the news. I can vouch for seeing petticoat drapery fluttering on the balcony long before gun-fire."

"Yes, I was up with the dawn, and, you naughty man, you are like to keep me waiting till the sundown-gun before you tell the news."

Sir Michael, who greatly enjoyed such a passage of arms with his niece, now drew the slight girl to his side with an affectionate endearment, and proceeded with his story.

"Well, my Lord George, I have got something well worth your attention. Three of Ching Along's largest fast-boats, pierced for an hundred oars, and carrying three pivot guns each, tackled yonder plucky Yankee, and there was some of the prettiest fighting took place that I have known for years.

"After dogging the ship through the night, till nearly daylight, they assumed positions for boarding. The pirate king took the weather quarter from choice. His next largest vessel was ordered ahead of the ship, and, when signaled, she let run her sails, and dropped quietly back under the ship's lee bow, meaning to board by the head guys and martingale. The third fast-boat was assigned to the lee beam, and given charge of the fire-ball, which was to be thrown aboard amidship, at a given signal, when all three crews were expected to board and take the ship at a dash.

"Mark me, my lord, three hundred and fifty blood-

thirsty ruffians attacking thirty-two Americans in a night assault. But the nimble Yankees were as full of clever devices as the Indians of their great forests, and they set a worthy example for others in a similar warfare.

"Listen to me closely. The for'ard pirate vessel was run down, crushed and sunk by a blow from the cutwater of the handy ship. This was done by a quick lift of the weather helm, and by letting fly all the after sheets at a given word. None but well-disciplined men could have accomplished such timely maneuvers in the face of such impending danger.

"At that moment the lee-beam pirate luffed, meaning to board amidships. A big villain flung up the lighted fireball, aimed fairly enough, and hoping to clear a space on deck for boarding. Just then the main sheet was let go, and the flopping clew of the sail struck the spluttering fireball, and tumbled it back among the swarm of armed pirates on the fast-boat, while in the act of boarding.

"This accident created among the scorched freebooters the wildest confusion, which was soon rendered into consternation by the shrieks of the crushed and drowning men on the sinking fast-boat under the ship's bow, which events delayed their assault upon the Fleetwing.

"During all this time, Ching Along, the great admiral who has foiled our ships for twenty years, had closed for action on the weather quarter, not knowing what had transpired on the other two fast-boats. Swarming his men up over the stern and quarter of the Fleetwing, the gigantic leader would have captured the ship in a twinkling but for the lucky stroke of a whirling

spade, in the hands of the third mate. This broad-bladed instrument lopped off the head of the pirate king, and gave the Fleetwing's crew a moment to rally.

"Ching Along was in the act of cutting down the American captain with his great two-handed sword at the instant his head was cut off, and such was the force imparted to his ponderous weapon that it completed its work though in the hands of a headless man. The captain's fall appalled the Fleetwing's men. The battle trembled in the balance, and the day seemed lost for a time."

The Admiral paused, indulged in a little puffing to replenish his wind, and sought another glass of the too convenient Moselle, and then turned the conversation from the Earl to his daughter.

"Lucia, my pink of posies, Captain Lawrence of the Fleetwing is one of Nature's noblemen. He is a handsome, manly fellow. One to fill a breach, and hold it against all comers. A man to lead a forlorn hope just for the pleasure and peril it brings.

"While the most important blow was the spade-cut, given by Uncle Joe, an old colored officer, yet the day was lost beyond recall but for the marvelous skill in pistol-shooting by the brave young captain. When mortally wounded and nearly blinded by the mist of death, he coolly lodged a dozen minie-balls in the heads and hearts of as many pirates, as they rushed upon him with uplifted swords. Thus encouraged, the crew fought on and saved the ship."

"Oh, Uncle Seymour, Captain Lawrence must indeed

be a noble man, and brave as a lion. Do you think his wounds are mortal?"

"Our fleet surgeon thinks they are. But I believe with good nursing and judicious care that a man of such pluck and nerve ought to pull through. He is now threatened with traumatic fever, which, in this climate, with such an ugly wound, is likely to run high. The danger that Dr. McDonald most fears is pyæmia, or blood-poisoning."

"You'll see to it, dear uncle, that he has the best of attention, won't you? I know you will. Oh, how it thrills me to hear of such heroic deeds. And you say that he is fine-looking, too, uncle?"

"Yes, dear, he bears the imprint of nobility in manner and mien. No one can mistake the handsome fellow for other than he is."

"Tell me everything that you can think of about him, uncle."

"Ah, ha! my wee sma' lassie, I canna promise too much about the gentleman without the busses are forthcoming thick and fast. Heigh ho, the chances are getting sma' for an oo' lad like me, when a young hero comes to the fore." The old seaman indulged in a rude guffaw at Lucia's expense, and ended by solacing himself with another glass of wine, while his niece gayly responded, —

"You jolly, good uncle, you aren't very old, only a few tons too fat. Now, truly, I think you get kisses enough without resorting to such terrible measures of coercion."

"Ah, lassie, it's easier to compel a treaty, whether of

amity or kisses, with your guns double-shotted, and springs on the cable."

"Well, Father Neptune, how many extra ones must I promise for a daily report of strict attention to the wounded captain?"

"Possibly an old cove like me might manage to starve upon a dozen extra ones, duly selected, and daily administered. Mind, Lucia, not one of the dainty busses must be soured by too frequent contact with my flag-lieutenant."

This sally induced the Earl and the Admiral to indulge in a little raillery at the maiden's expense, which she rebutted by her pert reply.

"We shall not limit you to short rations in the commodity required, provided you acquit yourself well on two vital points: viz., constant attention to Captain Lawrence, and proper regard for my feelings by confining your peacock of a lieutenant more to his ship duties."

St. Clare was now called away to give audience to the Spanish commissioner from Luzon. After a little more earnest talk upon the matter in hand, Lucia and her uncle prepared to separate. The Admiral was about to betake himself to his boat, after securing the first instalment of confection from Lucia, when they were interrupted by the gun-fire of the war steamer Barracuda, as she got under way and steamed toward the Ly-Moon. Sir Michael explained that he had ordered the vessel out to look over the battle-ground, and see what could be found after such a desperate encounter.

CHAPTER V.

THE WOUNDED HERO.

CHARLES LAWRENCE, captain of the Fleetwing, was a young, athletic, handsome person of twenty-four years, a fine specimen of the active, sinewy seaman, — one thoroughly trained in the use of all weapons used in the contentions of men. His life among the perils and adventures of whalemen had been a fit training for his native daring, when battling with the monsters of the deep. In that rough school he developed his great gift of ingenuity, and found abundant opportunity to display his instant readiness for any emergency.

Though a quiet, unassuming man in moments of repose, having studious tastes and retiring habits, it needed but the sudden call of peril to arouse him into the intense action of a born leader, — a central figure around which all men gladly gather in times of danger, ready to follow wherever they may be led. Whether in combat with savage men or fighting his terrible battles with whales, when brought into supreme action with any foe worthy of his steel, Captain Lawrence was one to flash like a meteor, bearing all before him with the rush and rumble of a whirlwind.

The capture of the Pirate King, a herculean warrior, and leader of a horde of giants as big as himself, deemed the most ferocious and bloodthirsty freebooters in the

China seas, rightfully gave Lawrence a world-wide fame. Ching Along had probably robbed and sunk more than a thousand vessels during the past twenty years, most of which belonged to English merchants, against whom he bore a murderous hate, and with all-sufficient cause.

Until the Fleetwing brought Ching Along in among a heap of slain, it was the popular belief that the great admiral bore a charmed life, and could neither be killed nor captured. He was known to have once been a wealthy mandarin, who lived at Canton, and was a cousin of Governor Lin. Descended from Koxinga, the greatest of the ancient sea-kings, he came rightly by his renown.

Considerable of Ching Along's history had been brought to light recently, when Captain Walsh's well-planned naval expedition failed to capture him in the great Fo-Chow fight. At that time Governor Dinsmore offered five thousand dollars reward for the admiral's head. Because of that price set upon his head, the king's piracies greatly increased in ferocity, and many a troublesome official was thenceforth kidnapped and carried into slavery at the unknown pirate isles; while others were openly assassinated in public places, or secretly murdered in bed while peacefully sleeping in the midst of their families. A bold, bad man's methods of revenge upon English commerce and English people, because of the grievous wrongs inflicted upon him by the lawless East India Company, before its charter expired.

For the brilliant deed of killing this incarnate devil, and many of his followers, Captain Lawrence was at once made the local hero of the day. A well-merited measure of meed, bestowed with an unanimity of praise

rarely accorded to mortal. Though the wounded hero asserted that he had done nothing more than any brave man would have accomplished, his modest demeanor and unconscious nobility served but to increase his popularity.

It is a notable fact that the fair women of Victoria and Kow-Loon were first to proclaim Charles Lawrence a born hero — women who had lost husbands and fathers by the hand of the fiendish sea-robber. What wonder that bright eyes dwelt kindly upon such a paragon, and loving hearts coveted his attention after such a stupendous victory? Citizens of every rank, military as well as naval men, vied with each other to do him honor when he finally rallied from his deadly wound, and appeared in public with a pallid face and an arm triced in a sling.

With such achievements to awaken the sympathy of the fair sex, what wonder that an impetuous girl like Lucia Seymour — schooled in a life of self-reliance, and annoyed by the homage of inferior-minded men — should join in the hero-worship of the day, and become so infatuated with this "Nature's nobleman" that she divined before she saw him that he was worthy to possess her imperious heart? Having filled her mind with the innate manliness of the wounded hero, it was not strange that she became impatient to see him, or that she should prompt her ease-loving uncle to make superhuman efforts in his behalf.

Never before had the fastidious girl so prized her high social position and rare personal charms. Her rank and vast wealth — held in her own right — placed her somewhat in command of the situation. Her father's appro-

bation would absolve her in a measure from reproach, should she condescend to put herself in the way to be won by such a knight-errant. Alas! should he lack the moral courage to solicit her affection, then she must endeavor to win his instead.

As Captain Lawrence's wounds at first threatened to be fatal, his quarters were soon transferred from the Fleetwing to the house of Captain Drinker, who was an old China trader, and junior in the American firm, Rawl and Drinker, shipping and commission merchants.

The Captain was accompanied by Dr. Greville, his wounded physician, and the venerable third mate, — Uncle Joe Bailey, — who was a most efficient nurse. These, together with Tom Crawford, his oldest seaman, comprised Lawrence's household; sometimes assisted by one of the other officers, when another night watch was required in the sick-room during critical periods of the fever.

Old Tom was a herculean fellow, who had been well drilled in the use of arms on board of a naval vessel when young. A faithful, courageous sailor, and just the one to officiate as chief body-guard while the town was so filled with rumors of assassination, as the enraged pirates swarmed the port in disguise, intent upon revenge for the death of their leader.

Both civil and naval authorities were greatly aroused upon the occasion. A strong police force of Lascars nightly watched the Queen-street entrance, though it was barred and bolted, while a boat-guard, with a squad of marines from the warships, patrolled the harbor-front

for several weeks, until the excitement seemed to have died out.

The buildings in this part of Victoria are built of stone, and front upon Queen Street, the lower story being occupied by shops and stores, with dwellings above. The backs of the houses adjoin the sea-wall, their second stories being on a level with the parapet, a broad granite rampart made with embrasures for cannon in case of foreign war.

For the convenience of business firms and the seclusion of families living over the stores, high partition walls of masonry are built across the rampart, shutting in each block of houses by itself. This plan happily made Lawrence's apartments as secure as a fortress, and greatly facilitated the exclusion of all suspicious persons.

Projecting from the water-front of the Drinker warehouse is a short stone jetty, built out from a strong barbican whose archway leads through under the rampart to the warehouse. This entrance is guarded by a heavy portcullis, which is kept raised till a late hour at night for the use of people passing back and forth from the shipping; but when once closed for the night, the portcullis is not again raised until the sunrise gun from the flagship.

Just within the barbican, a flight of narrow stone steps leads up to the parapet where Tom stood guard, this being the only place of access to Lawrence's rooms from the water side. The rampart was kept furnished with bamboo lounging-chairs, and decorated with potted plants, making it a pleasant place for the captains to

assemble during their leisure hours. Here they could entertain their friends and watch the busy doings about the harbor. Here the officers and seamen from the Fleetwing were given free access when they came in answer to a signal, or to inquire about the captain. But no stranger was permitted to pass the jetty stair, which Tom jealously guarded, tramping back and forth over the battlement with a heavy cutlass dangling at his heels, and his belt embellished with navy pistols.

Besides these occasional jetties, there are numerous strong bastions projecting beyond the sea-wall, elevated four feet above the parapet and about fifteen feet above the highest flood-tide. These bastions have three embrasures. They were designed for a pivot-gun, which could sweep the escarpment in either direction, as well as throw a shot across the bay. The bastions serve another purpose of greater consideration in times of peace, for they break the swift rush of tide along shore, as do the jetties, making quiet eddies where the sampans and other harbor craft can anchor in safety.

In those days many a friendly hail came from the passing boats, their occupants being eager to learn the daily condition of the wounded captain. Some of the inquirers came from Kow-Loon, across the bay, where there is an English garrison, and where the Governor and other officials reside. Trailing their oars just clear of the sea-wall the boatmen hailed the hoary-headed sailor, —

"Say, there, shipmate! how's the Yankee captain who fought the pirates? We come from the Governor, who is anxious to know."

While Captain Lawrence was the sickest, old Tom was too much grieved to wish to talk about the sad condition of his loved commander, and would shake his head sadly and waft his enormous hand for the boats to begone. But now the current of his thoughts was convivial, and his tongue answered glibly to all comers; hence his reply to the present inquirer, —

"Teld his Excellency thet ther cap'n am mendin' stidily, thank yer. You can say, furdermore, thet ther 'Ole Man' ships ar new oar ev'ry day, an' will soon be able ter pull ar race wid ther best uv yer." This reply elicited a hearty cheer, as the crew gathered their oars and pulled back across the bay.

Crawford made his salute in answer to the cheer, and resumed his guard, big with the importance of the trust over which he presided. Sometimes delicate notes were tossed into the embrasure from a passing boat, sweet-scented messages from some of the notable families of Victoria, in which a sympathetic writer sent her best wishes for the recovery of "our brave deliverer," for the big pirate had been as much dreaded as Blue Beard of old. Tom grappled these embossed cards or pink-colored notes with the tips of his huge finger and thumb, sniffing at the divine exhalation with a grim smirk on his face, while he carried the fragrant missives to the officer of the sick-room; having much the air of a callow naturalist when handling his first specimen toad for microscopic inspection.

Among the daily visitors at the Drinker house was the English Admiral, who came puffing up the jetty stairs with purple face and rubicund nose, always tarrying for

a friendly chat with old Tom or Uncle Joe, whichever was on guard. One day Sir Michael found the invalid out on the rampart in a lounging-chair, and, as it was the first outdoor experience of the wounded man, the British nobleman congratulated him, and took a seat by his side.

While the Admiral sat smoking his Manila and chatting quietly — whiling away his usual half-hour before dining at the embassy — along came Ben Buntline, Tom's messmate, with a "brick in his hat." Ben came this time not so much to inquire about the captain as to negotiate a loan of money with Crawford to the amount of two fids of grog. The profound monetary discussion between these saline specimens greatly amused the Admiral, who subsequently reported the whole briny story to the Earl and his daughter, so we must needs find space to relate it.

"Hullo, Buntline, what's ther lay o' ther land wid yer?" hailed Tom, as his best-loved messmate reeled up the jetty stair, and confronted his guard.

"Hullo yerself, Tommy Crawford; gin us yer flipper — yer long-shore soger man."

"Why, Ben, ole boy, there's ar drop too much in yer locker," Tom replied, greatly ashamed lest the Captain should discover the condition of one of his best forecastle men.

"Mebby so, Tom. I's bin dining out wid ther Comprador (marketman). Ther Pigtail had sum bang-up fodder, chicken fixin's an' chow-chow, but his grog wuz lite, swash-about stuff. Now, ole Ben has nary a shot in ther locker ter buy ar good, stiff reef tops'il drink."

"But you've spliced yer braces plenty 'nough, Ben. Haul yer wind an' go aboard, ole shipmate. Cap'n wouldn't like ter see his best fo'castle man half seas over. Go aboard an' pipe down fur ar snooze."

"Avast ther, Tom. My 'spects ter Cap'n, hope he's gittin' out o' limbo. How's yer on fur ther jingle, Tommy? Charity am one o' ther ten cummun'ments, 'member. Come, tote us the price uv ar couple o' stiff horns, jist ter steddy ther swash-about stuff in me bread-locker."

"No, nary a red, me hearty. Ye's down by ther head now, an' don't mind ar spoke uv yer helm."

"All bosh, maty. I'm stanch ez ar long boat."

"No, Ben, yer lurch about like ar sampan in ar tide-rip. Hail ar dingy, an' go 'board fur ar snooze," persisted Crawford.

"Not I, ole 'Tucket. Why, Tom, I'm sorry ter sez it uv ar ole shipmate, but ye's ar leedle ther wuz fur bad whisky yerself."

"Dry up, yer boozy lubber."

"Sorry ter sez it uv ar onct 'spectable friend. It's you what careens ter yer garboard strake. Pity ther Cap'n should see his best fo'castle man drunk ez ar fiddler."

"Oh, ho! Is thet ther lay o' ther land? Why, Ben, ye's mistook ther parson fur ther devil this time, an' confessed to ther wrong feller. Yer knows Long Tom never h'ists aboard his grog 'cept ther 'casion suits fur ar full cargo, well stowed, an' offen renewed."

"All bosh, Tom. Ye's so tight now, thet 'taint jist 'spectable fur ar nice lad o' my sort ter keep yer com-

pany. So I'll take ar Sedan, and go call on the Consul. I'm ar ship in distress, yer see; a craft short o' water, an' sugar, an' grog. I'll go an' 'gotiate a bill uv exchange, wid ther 'Merican 'Ficial, fur two Cape Horn drinks, swash my timbers ef I don't."

And this best of the Nantucket seamen rolled unsteadily away on his official mission to the American Consul, while good-natured Crawford puffed away at his pipe, and paced the granite rampart, intent upon the duty in hand, though he loved his grog on befitting occasions as well as his tipsy shipmate.

CHAPTER VI.

SIR MICHAEL'S ELIXIR OF LOVE.

DAYS ran on into weeks since the arrival of the Fleetwing at Hong Kong. The sudden interest acquired in the young American captain had deepened into a popular appreciation of his heroism, especially while his life hung in the balance, until his deeds were now the theme of wonder and praise in every social circle.

While the uncertain and fluctuating condition of Lawrence's wounds became the topic of frequent conversation throughout Victoria, at the Ladrone Palace an ever-increasing sympathy was awakened among the chief residents, and many a prayerful appeal was offered by one little heart for his recovery.

Lady Lucia had openly possessed herself of the image of the heroic captain, assuming it as a preternatural God-gift, sent her in answer to a girlish plea for the companionship of one worthy of her love. Though the confiding girl had taken her father into her confidence, she had only permitted her gossiping old uncle to witness the great interest she felt in his *protégé*, as a means of spurring the corpulent and indolent man to do his best for the comfort of the wounded hero.

Who can tell the architectural process of a young affection, new-born in the heart of a fastidious maiden? Who can appreciate a girl's sense of isolation when thus

yearning for companionship of the one only being who can fulfill her allotted destiny? How gladly Lady Lucia had seized upon the flimsy prediction of her vision and her dream, and made the ideal presentment of her desires conform to a pleasing likeness of the new-found hero, in whom all saw something to admire.

Daily the girl's heart grew more tender and preoccupied with her unseen idol. Often in the silence of her chamber, and beneath the stars when on the balcony, where she consorted with her spirit mother and the angel companions, Lucia's prayers for the "dear young captain" became earnest and prolonged. When at length his convalescence was assured, and the girl's daily predictions of his recovery were fulfilled, well might the beautiful supplicant assume that Divine agency had again answered to her heartfelt appeals.

While the Earl had not been an indifferent observer of the novel transition going on in his daughter — being willing to leave her to the subtle intuitions of her own pure heart — it devolved upon the sagacious old Admiral to daily fathom the changing hues of Lucia's sympathies for the wounded Captain.

Though Lady Lucia would not confess her heaven-born vision to Sir Michael, yet from time to time he had divined her intense mood of unrest, and shrewdly endeavored to add an item of daily fuel to the swiftly growing sentiment which he discovered while yet the divine flame was but a farthing candle, believing it to be a providential intervention for good, provided for his pet young niece by the "sweet little cherub that sits up aloft to watch o'er the life of poor Jack."

Herein may be found a partial key-note to the English admiral's extravagant liking for the American captain. True, the Admiral had been honestly captivated by the marvelous skill and courage displayed by Lawrence in the pirate fight, and he had gladly set the example of glorifying such heroic deeds. But Sir Michael loved his wine and ease too much to devote his time to any one but Lucia. Thus the wounded man would soon have been left to the professional care of the surgeon, but for the pet niece, who was like the star of Bethlehem to this woman-loving sailor.

So, during Admiral Seymour's occasional visits to the Drinker house, the jolly old Briton frequently lauded the beauties of Lady Lucia to the convalescing Captain, for an old sailor loves dearly to gossip, and is as much given to match-making as a country modiste — not wholly subscribing to the doxology that love matches are made in heaven.

From him Lawrence learned that Lady Lucia Seymour was the handsomest peeress in England. She was described to the wide-eyed sailor as a slim, graceful girl with tender blue eyes, veiled with long dark lashes and arched with softly penciled brows. Eyes capable of expressing fun and frolic, or deepening their blue into an imperious dignity; a trait fallen to her down through the centuries from the arrogant Dukes of Somerset, who had mated with kings and queens in the long gone past.

Such was the Admiral's daily tattle about the charming qualities of his beloved niece. He never tired of portraying the beauties of her chestnut hair and rosebud

lips, painting her charms in his quaint, rich coloring of nautical phrases, ravishing the ear of the wounded man with visionary pictures of what "might yet be," if he would but "hurry up" and get well. What an incentive was this to live! Who would consent to die and be ferried to the Plutonian shore with such a star-beam shining in his Orient? Such was Lawrence's conclusion, and he lived.

"Ah, Captain," the cunning old seaman would exclaim, as day after day he found his young *protégé* hovering on the dark border. "Ah, Captain, if I were a youngster of four-and-twenty like you, I wouldn't die, with such a sweet boon in promise. Neither would I consent to lay upon the skids or in the dry dock over-long, with so much to live for."

In reply to such an enticing harangue, all the blood in Lawrence's veins found its way to his face. So often had these charming pictures been limned by the Admiral that Lawrence came at length to believe that it might not be a mere will-o'-the-wisp which he dangled before him with the humane intent of coaxing him back into life again.

After Lawrence had once grappled with the enticing thought of being an object of interest to Lady Lucia, and had suffered the rose-hued idea to nestle snugly about his heart, the tenderly cherished sentiment daily acquired growth, as the weeks of pain went by, until his maimed body began to glow with returning health. Then he found himself eagerly questioning his noble visitor about the dreamy myth of a girl whose beauty had so bedizened his weak brain in the past.

"It is very kind of you, Admiral, to entertain a sick man with such pleasant descriptions of your niece. But when you try to bolster up a cripple like me with the notion that a person of rank can have more than a passing interest in my affairs, you are alluring me by false colors."

"Nay, my lad, you are all adrift in your reckoning. I speak the truth when I say that the girl has taken an interest in you since the day of your arrival, and she now openly expresses a strong preference for you. Just how this all came about, I can't tell. It's a strange affair to me, but it's true."

"My noble friend, it is very kind of you to ignore the impassable gulf between our social positions. I cannot imagine Lady Seymour associating with any one short of the peerage. To do so would be an outrage upon her birthright."

"I tell you, Captain, my little Lucia is a girl who thinks for herself. Nobility of character is a supreme quality with her. Give her merit and mental caliber, and she don't care a whit for the mere accident of birth. See how she scorns and snubs my first luff — a born peer of an old family. He has no more chance with her than you have of going to the moon."

"It is a charming method of rescuing such a wreck as I am, and I fully appreciate your friendly motive. I think you must see for yourself, Admiral, that I am thriving nicely on your ethereal diet."

"Right, my boy. Fly your Blue Peter a little higher every day, and I'll live to match the finest pair of lovers in all the land. What does our surgeon say about your progress to-day?"

"Dr. McDonald thinks that I am gaining strength rapidly, and is greatly surprised that my wounds close so steadily. I can indorse his prognosis. See how easily I can exercise a little already," and the enthused fellow got up from his lounging-chair and walked about the rampart, though with a weak, staggering gait. "I took a sedan ride to-day, and think I might take a boat ride to-morrow."

"Glad to know it, my noble fellow. The pirates gave up trying to kill you, thinking you were sure to die. They'll get up another assassination plot soon, so keep shady. Suppose I appoint for you to dine aboard the flagship six days hence; can you promise to be on hand?"

"I don't know about that. I'm as impatient to get aboard as you are to have me, but" —

"Remember that Lady Lucia sails for England soon," interrupted the Admiral, wishing to add one more incentive.

"Does she, indeed? Then I feel quite sure that I shall be able to keep the appointment."

"Very well. We'll have the Governor and a choice selection of ladies and gentlemen over from Kow-Loon, and some of my officers from the fleet. After dinner his Excellency can present the government reward for Ching Along's head, and make his presentation speech; to which you need make but a brief reply. There is a general wish to make a notable public affair out of it, hoping to stir up the cowardly flunkies of the port, and induce my naval officers to pattern from your method of handling pirates."

"Well, Sir Michael, I will put myself in training and improve as fast as I can. If the noise and confusion on board don't careen me — in this light ballast trim — all may go well. Are you sure Lady Seymour will be present?"

"Ah, you rogue! you begin to prick up your ears like a blooded pointer. Yes, St. Clare and the bonnie lassie will be aboard, if his Lordship is not detained at Canton longer than he thought."

"I hope that they will. I could not bear the disappointment of not seeing your niece, after all the nice things you have told me about her."

"Yes, yes, she'll be there. And I'll teach you how to trim ship, and win a fair consort. What's more, to be honest with you, I've got a shipload of interest in this affair myself."

"Why should you care about the matter?"

"Bless your heart, I love that little girl better than everything else in creation. Doesn't the lad see that my cargo would be short a boatload of kisses — finest brand in the market — if I chanced to time your reception so that Lucia could not be there?"

"I feel quite relieved to find that you have so large interest in the matter."

"Yes, Captain, I've been tutored by blue eyes and red lips on that score too well to forget Lady Lucia."

"So Lady Seymour is affectionate, as well as handsome?"

"Ay, ay, young man. She is rather sweet on an old sea-lark of an uncle, to be forgotten on this occasion. It's for you to discover what interest she will take in a

young gony about a third of my age. I shouldn't wonder if you taught her that bussing was a choice product, best kept in the family, and thus leave an old sea-dog unkissed and unloved — a total wreck to the end of his days."

And the jovial old sailor waddled down the jetty stair to his boat, roaring like a huge breaker with the merriest laughter, his fat sides shaking like a topsail in stays.

CHAPTER VII.

MEETING OF THE LOVERS.

THE day appointed for Captain Lawrence's entertainment was at length announced by a salvo of guns from the flagship, while an American ensign was kept flying at the peak in honor of the young hero. The Admiral sent his own boat to take his honored guest aboard the Invincible. There Lawrence met the Governor and his aids, and many notable naval and military officers, at dinner. Later in the day a large concourse of civilians were permitted to board the vessel and pay their respects to the wounded Captain. Many of the shore folks were English ladies from high social circles, bringing tributes of respect, all eager to do homage to the guest of the day.

The dinner was meant to be a grand, *recherché* affair, though there was a little too much wine and wassail to conform to Lawrence's taste, for he was the most abstemious of men. The ship was dressed for the day alow and aloft with countless flags. Occasional salutes were fired and the marine bands played stirring martial airs, for the purpose of making the jubilant occasion a memorable day in the annals of piracy, as many people, residents as well as foreigners, had been robbed and killed by the over-bold pirates, recently grown more desperate than ever.

The officials and invited guests were gathered aft on the poop deck, over which an awning was spread. The main deck was given up to the surging mass of people from the shore, those supplied with passes, for there was a general dread of some murderous pirate getting aboard and accomplishing the long threatened assassination. Hundreds of other spectators were grouped about the ship in boats, people of all nationalities, curious to witness the demonstration.

Governor Dinsmore's remarks were received with frequent applause. In delivering his address and presenting the reward of five thousand dollars for the king pirate's head, his Excellency endeavored to impress all present with the growing lack of vigilance and courage in combating the freebooters; which he contrasted with the heroic resistance of Captain Lawrence and his crew; an exemplary sample of what might be done by courageous men.

Captain Lawrence responded briefly, and to the point. He ended his remarks by bestowing the reward which the Governor had given him, upon Uncle Joe Bailey, to whom all honor was due for the especial head in question. The whole affair was most gratifying to his officers, and but one thing was wanting to complete the captain's happiness. The Earl of St. Clare and his daughter were not present, as the Canton steamer failed to arrive at her usual time. Their absence was regretted by all, especially by the Admiral and his guest.

This disappointment, together with the noise and excitement about him, acted at length on Lawrence's weak condition, and he fainted from sheer exhaustion.

Dr. McDonald, the ship's surgeon, was present, and ordered the swooned man to be laid in the Admiral's reclining-chair, and wheeled under the awning. After a long swoon the Captain was rallied. A deathly pallor still lingered on his face and made him an object of interest to several English ladies of rank who clustered about him, openly expressing their admiration of his heroism, and showing the true feminine sympathy for his weak and wounded state.

In the midst of Lawrence's enthusiastic reception by the Victoria ladies, and while he yet lay bolstered up in the lolling-chair, engaged in hand-shaking and accepting bouquets, a tumult suddenly occurred among the crowd of women, caused by some new-comer, before whom all gave way, as in the presence of a queen.

The murmur of admiration from the ladies drew Lawrence's attention to the flushed face of a young girl who was earnestly trying to make her way to his side. Her blue eyes, brown hair, and exquisite beauty could not be mistaken for other than Lady Lucia Seymour; but, as she had not arrived from Canton, who could it be?

With a frank smile and alert air of recognition the debonair young creature strenuously persisted in forcing her way to the chair, with her eyes fastened earnestly upon Lawrence's face, proffering a word of apology to the good-natured ladies whom she asked to give way. With a courtly smile or gracious bow to others between whom she had wedged, some of whom were reluctant to let her pass, the flushed girl at length stood before the astonished Captain in all the opulence of youth and beauty.

Such was the conscious expression of joy beaming in her face that the girl electrified the pale-faced Captain, until his sea-bronzed cheeks flushed as vividly as her own. This she observed, and it emboldened her to greet him frankly the instant she reached his chair, all breathless as she was, —

"Is this Captain Lawrence of the Fleetwing?" and blue eyes delved deep down into the fever-lighted grays, while she waited his response.

"Yes, thank you, the same," was the captain's brief reply.

"Seeing that the Admiral and my father were occupied with the Governor, will you permit me the pleasure of presenting myself? — Lady Lucia Seymour."

And the blushing young peeress held out her small patrician hand, moist and ungloved, and laid it in the pale, cold palm of the hero, proffering it with a degree of friendliness partially accounted for by her ardent hero-worship — a national sentiment with English ladies — but more especially from an unguarded preference which she cared not wholly to conceal.

As Lawrence took her hand he raised himself from his recumbence — an effort he had not attempted for others. The tremulous little palm lingered willingly in the bronzed hand of the sailor, but with an awkward, unconventional delay; as though two palpitating hearts were greeting with never a wish to be sundered. It was a most notable event for all the fair gossips around. Soft gray eyes and tender blues were blending their strong magnetic glances, disclosing the inmost souls of the recipients to each other, with never a thought that

curious eyes were dissecting them to the bone and marrow. At length, with something very akin to confusion, Lady Lucia broke the spell, and at once showed her courtly training, —

"Captain Lawrence, my uncle has taken every opportunity to impress us with his high regard for you. He speaks of you as a brave, noble man, one who has accomplished the most brilliant deeds of valor, such as have not fallen to the lot of any officer under his command, though their opportunities of a like nature have been numerous. Knowing this, I have hastened aboard to make your acquaintance, and render my just meed of homage."

"I, too, have heard the Admiral relate many incidents connected with your Ladyship and the noble Earl. And here let me thank you for the gracious sympathy frequently received from yourself and father, in hours of pain and discouragement, when death seemed a constant attendant. Ere you came, the noise and confusion made me regret having undertaken this task, but now I feel repaid more than I can express."

The tender compliment implied in Lawrence's closing remarks again induced the roses to mount into the cheeks of his companion, yet she fluently replied, —

"It pains me to see how worn and weak you are, Captain. I fear you have greatly overtaxed yourself on this festive occasion, given in your honor, and so gratifying to us all." And she looked about with queenly courtesy upon the other ladies, graciously assuming to speak for them as well as herself, adding, —

"Do you know, Captain Lawrence, that when we find

you so young and unassuming," — and again she adroitly assumed to speak for all, — "we are at a loss to know how you can possess such surpassing courage and heroic endurance as Uncle Seymour tells about. Let me hope that you will take an early opportunity to personally relate to us your method of resisting such great odds in battle."

"Believe me, Lady Seymour, it will give me great pleasure to comply with your request. I have frequently promised Sir Michael to avail myself of his invitation upon the first moment of real convalescence."

"Oh, thank you; we should like nothing better than to receive your earliest visit at the embassy."

And the young girl stepped blushingly back to the rear of the chair, considerately making room for the crowd of new-comers who brought tributes of fruit and flowers. Some brought kindly messages, which were delivered with tearful eyes, pressed the now feverish hand of the wounded man, and passed on, making way for others.

Lady Lucia had accomplished the one wish of her heart in thus meeting Lawrence, and the proud young peeress stood beside his chair content and happy, watching numerous other fair women press forward with their much prized tributes. The only extraneous ornament worn by the regal beauty upon this occasion was a delicate creamy rosebud among her affluent tresses. Out of this tiny flower arose the first marked expression of preference shown by him.

Suddenly it dawned upon the sensitive young creature that she had been less considerate of the sick man than

others. Blushing with lively consciousness of her omission, she laid her dainty hand upon the hero's arm, exclaiming with an outspoken frankness most charming in one of her rank, —

"Oh, Captain Lawrence, I have neglected to bring a tribute of fruit or flowers. We came directly from the belated steamer to the flagship, fearing we might be too late to take part in your reception. Please accept this as my apology."

"Yes, flowers and fruit have a most agreeable smell and flavor to one languishing under a wound," he replied, suffering his eyes to wander from the piqued young face to the creamy rosebud tossing and swaying in Lady Lucia's hair.

With the rare tact of her sex, she made answer to his appealing glance at her flower: "And would you accept so trivial a flower, after all these rare bouquets from others more thoughtful than I, so meager a gift as my little toilet rose?"

"Certainly, my lady, and, believe me, I shall prize it above all that I have received."

Instantly the impulsive girl knelt beside the chair of the wounded hero, and with a girlish expression of gladness requested him to free the yellow bud for himself, — a task worthy of such a knight-errant. Lawrence succeeded in disentangling the flower with his well hand, dwelt upon its beauty an instant, and pressed the rare exotic slyly to his lips, — while making a deceptive show of smelling it, — in spite of the open publicity of the act. Lady Seymour rose, with a look of delight, saying, —

"I regret having so poor a tribute to offer. But my gifts shall be more worthy of your acceptance in future. The Ladrone garden is well supplied with nice fruits and flowers, and, if you permit, I will send you a daily gift from our abundant store."

Lawrence bowed his thanks for the munificent offer, and replied in low tones only meant for Lady Lucia's attentive ear, —

"Believe me, this little bud is the most precious gift of the day."

"Oh, thank you, Captain! How considerate you are to thus shield my previous neglect. In this I discern a rare intuition which should serve to win for you a very Waterloo of battles on the sea."

At this juncture the preoccupied pair were interrupted by the Admiral and the Earl. Sir Michael approached, calling out lustily, —

"Where's my niece? Where's Lady Seymour stowed away? Oh, ho! here you are; moored fore-and-aft in the very thickest of the fight. My friends, this young lady would not consent to my seeing the Governor and party off before I introduced her to this 'brave young Captain,' as she is pleased to call this noble American citizen."

"But, uncle, you were so very long coming that I could not wait."

"Bless me! how quickly one scents the noble game afar off. The old story of the magnet and the needle. Couldn't wait for your old uncle, ha?"

"You were so busy with his Excellency that I did not care to wait, and I piloted myself. Didn't I do nicely, uncle?"

"Ha, ha! by St. George and the Dragon! Merit and beauty have an amount of polarity equal to the tendrils of a vine."

"And what may that be, you dear, old Precious?" asked the witching girl, glad to turn her uncle into less personal remarks.

"Why, lassie, sailors tell the part of the world they are in by the direction in which a vine clambers. Like Jack's bean-stalk, the tendrils always twine one way at the north of the equator, and t'other way when south of the line. Now, mark me, Lucia, a vine twines to meet the sun, which swings different ways in opposite parts of the globe. That's polarity, and it's polarity which helps a lassie to find a laddie in a crowd like this." The old seaman indulged in a boisterous laugh, and claimed the usual kiss of his blushing niece. Lady Lucia responded to his just demands in the way of osculation, and replied with spirit to his jocose repartee:

"How jolly you are, Uncle Seymour. One would think that you had just escaped foundering at sea and hadn't seen the sun for a month, you discourse so beautifully about the magnet and the needle, and the delicate and little-known polarization of climbing plants."

Assuming a comical look of dignity, a quality which ill-fitted his rubicund face, Sir Michael placed his arms akimbo, cock-billed his venerable head a-port, and arched his eyebrows with a droll expression of mock surprise at the transgression he had detected aboard of Her Britannic Majesty's ship Invincible.

"Ah, bonnie lassie, this must never happen again. To think of your slying aboard of the flagship without

paying the proper toll — a kiss; the only coin passing current here."

"You forget, uncle, that you had greatly overdrawn your rations before I went to Canton; so behave, or I shall put you on short allowance. It seems to me that our wounded friend looks tired, uncle."

"You are right, my pet. Captain Lawrence, you are looking weary. We'll end this business by retreating to the cabin. Captain Walsh, request the officers to clear the deck for the day!"

"Yes, Admiral, I will attend to it at once."

Careful hands, under the guidance of the surgeon, carried the chair in which Lawrence reclined to the quiet seclusion of the after-cabin, where no further intrusion was permitted for the day. After a brief, refreshing nap, Lawrence waked, ready to enjoy a quiet chat with the Earl and his daughter. Though not for long, for Sir Michael was bent upon doing a little diplomatic business with his brother, who had just returned from a most important discussion of maritime matters with Governor Lin, the Chinese commissioner.

The courtly old Earl made suitable apology to the Admiral's guest, whom he left to be entertained by his daughter. The situation was so new and novel to Lawrence and Lady Lucia, that for a time naught but a palpitating silence prevailed. Lady Seymour industriously fanned the recumbent convalescent, and sat with drooping lids and slightly averted face, tremulous and expectant in the presence of this manly counterpart of her vision in the sky. She who had made light of the difficulties of self-introduction at a public reception, was

now mute and inert when left alone with the man of her choice.

Lawrence had found it easy to follow the lead of the fluent peeress when she so bravely showed her preference before the world. But now he could not rid himself of the belittling thought that he was but a plebeian in the presence of a being of exalted rank and transcendent beauty. What though her lustrous eyes had tattled about the ardent condition of her heart, and her pink fingers now lay purposely within his reach, how could he assume the courage to put forth his hand and make the expected overtures to this high-born girl?

Beauty in its highest perfection repels too near approach in all, while one of rustic birth becomes abashed and humiliated in its presence. It holds us aloof, like a noble statue, hushed with reverence and awe. But when rare human beauty discloses the added charms of intelligence and affection, answering back to our own kindred qualities in melodious voice, quivering with human sympathy, revealing the eager outlook of a pure soul yearning for recognition, then reverence gives place to adoration, and awe to palpitant heart throbs.

Such was the beauty of Lady Lucia Seymour. A superb figure, one to catch the eye of a connoisseur, though clothed in the habiliments of a peasant. A form to tempt the admiring eye to look and linger, and steal back yet another furtive glance, as if spying upon an angel. There was a touch of Oriental grace and softness in the every movement of this proud English blonde. To those who knew her best she seemed the very embodiment of a poet's dream. A creature in whom Nature had woven

her best handiwork in some halcyon hour of supremest joy.

No wonder that the pale-faced Captain shrank abashed and reverent before a revelation of such supernal loveliness. No wonder that this brave, free heart, weakened by traumatic fever and the oft-recurring pain from his wounds, became appalled when confronted with the audacious problem of wooing a being high as heaven above his most sanguine aspirations.

There they sat, these two from antipodal spheres, listening to the rustling fan and the pulsation of two awe-stricken hearts confronted with their destiny, until the silence at length became unendurable. With the rare intuition of her sex, Lucia divined the feelings of her companion, and accepted his shame-faced modesty as another proof of his nobility. She trembled lest this too considerate man should deem it neither possible nor prudent to vault over the conventional barriers which the world had built up between them — restrictions as cold and immutable as a polar glacier.

The ardent girl had brooded over Lawrence's fancied image many weeks before they met — a manly model to encroach upon a maiden's heart. She had fashioned her hero-lover as best she could from the Admiral's descriptions and Lawrence's deeds of valor, — achievements which had filled their local world with fame. This, together with the preternatural presentment made visible the night before the Fleetwing arrived, was the fabric from which Lucia constructed the ideal which she had learned to love so well. Now, if the abashed Captain would not act, she must. She could not give him up, and she would not lose him so.

"Would you rather that I should not fan you, Captain Lawrence?" she asked, as a means of learning whether her tongue had lost its cunning.

"Oh, no! It is very grateful to me, I assure you. But I fear it may tire your Ladyship," and their downcast eyes met slyly, and dwelt timidly upon each other.

"It does not weary me in the least," rejoined the girl. "Oh, Captain, how I wish that I might do something more for you, you look so pale and anxious."

The girl's voice became tremulous, and her soul-laden eyes were moist and eloquent with the tenderest sympathy. Lawrence's eyes could not but respond to such an appeal. And when by some unaccountable chance their hands met on the arm of the chair, they clasped tightly, without the mental volition of either, transmitting a hot current through their beings which loosed the tongues of both as by magic. From that moment Lady Lucia was master of the awkward situation, and she clearly stated the first tenet in love's dogma, for their future guidance.

"Captain Lawrence, let me ask you to be frank and natural with me in the future. Open-hearted as you would be with your own dear sister. My father and I take an unusual interest in you, and it would delight us both to be of some little service to you. Please talk to me about yourself freely. Tell me something that will not tire you in telling. Anything is better than silence, which you must know every girl abominates."

Thus adjured, never again did the lovers fail to find subjects of vital interest to each other. Even the long silence which followed this appeal was now made voluble

by their tattling eyes and the pair of communicative hands which seemed intent upon making two into one. It was the old, old story of love-making. For the time they were like two peasant lovers — forgetful of the patrician birth of the one, and the rustic parentage of the other.

When Captain Lawrence and Lady Seymour first met, the daring sailor had experienced a giddy sense of exultation, as might have been expected. In the sweet surprise of that meeting he showed the imperial texture of his soul, though suddenly called upon to leap the formidable barrier of rank and be confronted with the long lineal descent of the Seymours; while she became assured of his response to her love, and was made proud and happy with her choice. In that supreme moment Lawrence was swift to recognize the scarlet fanions of Eros hung out over the heaven-high battlements of her autocratic love, whence her blue eyes looked down upon her new-found ideal, as the pearly hands of visionary angels stretch down to us in dreams.

CHAPTER VIII.

OLD TOM AND LADY LUCIA.

LATE one afternoon soon after the Admiral's reception, while Crawford was diligently pacing the rampart, a boat appeared coming from the line-of-battle ship, in which were the Admiral, the Earl, and his daughter. The boat skirted the shore before the wind and tide, just allowing free play to the oar-blades as she passed the sampans and the jetties.

After rounding the Drinker jetty the coxswain was ordered to pull in to the bastion where Tom was on guard. The gig threaded her way among the coolie boats until she lay fairly in the eddy near the escarpment wall, where she was brought to a stand with oars trailing in the water.

The Admiral hailed, and made inquiries about the Captain, which Tom answered to his satisfaction. Then the clear, musical voice of Lady Seymour took up the conversation, and addressed a message to the old sailor. Tom doffed his tarpaulin quickly while listening to the dainty young girl.

"Please to remember me, also, to your Captain, Mr. Crawford. Say that the Earl of St. Clare and his daughter take great interest in his case, and leave their regards. Remember to keep a good watch over him, won't you, good Thomas?"

Springing up like a naiad queen in the stern-sheets of the tottling boat, the animated girl tossed up her purse of gold to the white-haired sailor, saying, "Spend that among your shipmates, Mr. Crawford, and keep the best of watch over the wounded Captain."

For an instant the anxious girl fixed her blue eyes steadily upon old Tom, the better to impress her wishes on the half-dazed man, ere she dropped back into her seat between her uncle and father. The crew grasped their oars and pulled away toward the Cliff Stair, leaving the abashed sailor standing hatless and motionless as a graven image hewn from the battlement rock.

Big, bright tears stole slowly down the old man's cheeks, groping their way among the devious furrows of his weather-beaten face. The grand lady had spoken to him as freely as Nance Coffin could have done, at dear old 'Tucket. That brightest of God's creatures had addressed him as Mr. Crawford, which was more to the scarred veteran than her pure gold. When at length Tom recovered his voice and bewildered senses, and ventured to put on his hat, his broken utterances gave a glimpse of his thoughts.

"Shiver my timbers! ef thet leedle gal ain't ar angil. She'd make ar man uv ar feller wid one look uv them ere pretty e'es. She called me Mr. Crawford. Blazes! wuzen't it nice, though? I wish I had ar lookin'-glass jist ter see ef it sticks to ar feller.

"Wonder old mammy Crawford duzen't bust out ur ther Nantucket sand to 'gratulate her sonny. 'Watch my Cap'n!' Ah, lassie, ther 'Ole Man' knows thet Tom would gin his life fur hizzen, any day. 'Watch my

Cap'n!' Eh, leddy, wid sech ar leftenant ez you am, ter gin orders, these old binnacle lites would do double duty ter please ther gal."

And the rime-headed old sailor drew his sleeve across his misty eyes, with a furtive look around, not wishing to discover his gentle weakness to the ribald world. Again, for the hundredth time, the well-meaning fellow promised to "walk in the light," through his brief span, and let wine and women go by the board.

Poor old Tom, he would become the prey of the next land shark who attacked him, yielding from sheer habit to the imperative demand of the moment, for very human was Tom Crawford. For fifty years he had earned his begrudged wages on the sea, and spent his money free as water, which is the beginning and the end of a sailor's knowledge of political economy.

Not many hours after the above event, a boat came from the Fleetwing, and the crew landed at the jetty. One of the men went up town on business for the mate, while others of the crew came up the rampart to inquire about the Captain, and glean news of the grand reception on board the Invincible. Crawford was glad of the opportunity to regale his shipmates about the Captain's love affair on the flagship, which had become the gossip of the town.

"Tell yer what, maties, Cap'n did look 'appy thet day. 'Bout ez 'appy ez ar Sconset clam what 'scapes diggin' on bake-day."

"How wuz it, Tom? Heave ahead, ole boy, an' teld us what tuck place. Spin away wid yer twister, an' make ar cable tow uv it."

"Well, yer see, Jim, thet ere leedle craft, — the ole 'arl's darter, — met our Cap'n aboard the double-decker, an' jist clapped her leedle flipper inter hizzen, ter sort o' 'gratulate ther 'Ole Man' on ther way we chaps walloped ther Pigtails."

"Bully fur she, boys! Thet gal am ar gennewine buster. She knows a brave un whin she sees 'im. But, Tom, how did Cap'n carry sail wid thet ellegant gal fur consort?"

"Ah, chaps, thet's where ther frisk o' ther frolic comes in. What wid ther big noise an' ther speechifying, ther Cap'n hed jist rallied frum ar tip-over, an' hadn't gut inter full sailin' trim when ther pretty she un loomed in ther offin'. But I teld yer what, maties, when ther Cap'n did seed 'er, he lowered his white colors quicker, his eyes gut big ez saucers, an' he h'isted his red buntin' at every truck in ar jiffy. Oh, it wuz good fur ole eyes ter see, lads, fur ther 'Ole Man' looked 'appy ez ar lobster jist biled."

"Seems like it, Tom. Fur them ere high-born uns must lift a feller sort o' tiptoe, till he sails his craft wid on'y ther keel touchin' on the sea-tops. Oh, it's jolly sailin', I reckon, wid yer skys'ils jist dippin' in ther moonbeam; fur when two critters am in luv, everything gits sort o' gold-colored to both ther spoonies, an' their blinkers lift an' lower, an' darken an' shine, like ther moon dodgin' ar storm scud."

"Suthin' so, Jim. It's e'en a' most like ar ship freighted wid ar liquor cargo. Ther craft lifts her counters in ar sea-way, like ar girl in ar ballroom, sort o' feard ter water ther grog in her hold."

"How did ther pretty minx fly 'er buntin', Tom? Did ther she un show ther white or ther red in 'er colors?"

"Shiver my tops'ils, maty, there's the pint. Them ere blue e'es o' hern shined like ar blue billow at noonday. Ther gal's face talked all over like ar logbook. She answered Cap'n, signal fur signal, an' color fur color. Oh, she am ar rare un, you bet!"

"Sure 'nuf, Tom, 'twas ar clean case o' swappin' clocks at fust sight, gainsay it who will. Bless me, maties, I'll stan' god-ther to thet gal myself."

"Ay, ay, 'Tucket, right you am; thet lassie showed ther cut uv 'er jib an' ther color uv 'er blueblood, when she moored longside uv our Cap'n, the bravest heart in all ther China seas."

This final sentiment was indorsed by an uproarious cheer from the crew, which induced Nantucket Jim, the minstrel of the ship, to strike up a rare old English song, glorifying British ladies of high degree. His shipmates joined heartily in the chorus, as did a number of passing boatmen, one and all showing their appreciation of the romance of the day.

CHAPTER IX.

DAYS OF WOOING.

DAYS lengthened into weary weeks while Lawrence was convalescing. Having been given *carte blanche* by the Seymours, he became a frequent guest at the Ladrone Palace, making a world of delectable gossip for the fair women of Victoria. What the progress of love-making had been between Lady Lucia and Lawrence none knew but themselves; though the sly old Admiral and the observing Earl had surmised that it was prospering.

As the time drew near for the ambassador's departure for England, gossip ran high among the most notable ladies of the place, — a vile contagion that simulates politics in men, — until now many feminine hearts were consuming with curiosity, or dying with envy, to learn the sequel of the romantic attachment going on at the "Palace of Thieves" — as those not having *entrée* chose to term the place.

At length when cards were issued for the farewell reception at the embassy, the social world of Kow-Loon and Victoria were upon the *qui vive* for the occasion. It was expected to be a grand, *recherché* affair, such as only the ambassadors of crowned heads can accomplish with regal splendor. Happy were the favored few invited outside of official circles, and bitter the dis-

appointment of others equally entitled to consideration; as all classes were alike eager to witness the probable *dénouement* of the lovers.

As the Seymours spent part of their time at Canton, where a commercial treaty was being negotiated with Governor Lin and other high commissioners, the opportunities for wooing had been irregular. But during each brief stay at Hong Kong, Sir Michael's boat always touched at Drinker's jetty when on his way to dine with the Earl, tarrying long enough to take Captain Lawrence on board, as the Admiral desired that he should make the most of his privilege.

Thus it happened on such occasions that the young people were daily thrown together for a few hours with the sanction of all concerned. Whilst Lady Seymour lost no public opportunity to do homage to the wounded Captain from the first hour that they met; upon all private festal occasions the frank, free girl openly devoted her whole attention to the much-loved hero, without thought or care who might be present to witness her devotion.

It was no mere girl-love which Lady Lucia unwittingly proffered her new-found knight of the sea, during these delicious interviews. She had outlined many a maiden fancy of that sort. Juvenile love-freaks which come like vernal showers, and pass with the April days of girlhood. As doll-playing is a diminutive school in which to arouse the maternal instincts of a child: so a woman's girl-loves are the enameled ground-work whereon to emboss the fervid June roses which blossom but once in her life — whether to deck the altar or the grave.

Years of European and Oriental travel with the grand old Earl for companion — cultured and profound in the philosophies of literature and life — had brought early fruition and earnest meditation to Lady Seymour, until the budding girl who left England four years before quickly put off her immature ways, and by swift gradation acquired the rounded grace of a full-crowned woman.

Measured by solar annualities, Lucia Seymour had not yet overstepped the flowery border of her teens. But who does not comprehend that as thought matures mind, so mental maturity in precocious youth ripens and develops the physique before its time? Thus mental fructescence rather than calendared years must be the criterion of a girl's capabilities.

Tarrying at many foreign courts, and sojourning at numerous great centers of thought, failed not to present every type and phase of man; and yet, amidst all her travels, Lady Lucia had thus far wandered fancy-free. Arriving at Hong Kong, she had anticipated meeting several relatives of rank among the officers of her uncle's fleet; but, as we have seen, she had not found a person among them all to fill the unoccupied niche in her too fastidious heart, which was daily hedging itself about with yet more impassable barriers as the world's people passed in panorama before her too scrutinous gaze.

But in Charles Lawrence Lady Lucia had found a kindred soul, one fashioned so much to her liking in manner and mien that he seemed born of her own conception; one to require a new focus, a broader field than other men in which to scrutinize his innate merit.

Lawrence was a rare new type to Lucia, such a one as the reflective girl had loved to contemplate when pondering the great deeds of her noble ancestors. A quality of person sparsely tabulated among the hereditary patricians from which she was expected to choose her life-companion.

The happiness which the lovers found in each other's company was a pleasant glamour in which to exist, a delicious love-mirage, akin to the radiant mist-clouds hovering about the mountain tops of Eros. At such times, when the regnant eyes of her lover dwelt too long and tenderly upon her all-willing face, a conscious luster stole into Lucia's serene orbs, and a perceptible tint of spring roses flushed her cheeks — varying from the pale tint of inner leaves to their deepest crimson — though the face of the fair girl was then somewhat sun-touched with travel.

When in the presence of her lover, Lady Lucia's eyes were not the least of her winsome charms. Though always luminous and tender during hours of tranquillity, in moments when she was pre-occupied with pious reflections there was often a far-away spiritual look of indescribable beauty. Now as they sit together in quiet converse and soulful silence — pondering dreams which are not wholly dreams — Lucia's eyes were made eloquent by many new-found revelations, sweet subdued ecstasies, not wholly ambushed by her speechless tongue or drooping lids.

As the day of their final separation drew near, Lady Lucia could not but wonder that Lawrence should forfeit his last suitable opportunity to tell his love, and win

her hand. In the confusion of the morrow's assemblage, he could not expect to find time or place to woo her, beneath the prying eyes of the gossiping crowd. As maiden pride yet stood monitress over her impetuous love, how could she prompt her beloved sailor to express his mind and disclose his heart, lest the dear God-given one might deem such assiduity too unseemly and overbold?

To young Lawrence, the old Earl's daughter had daily grown more queenly and lovable, until at length he exalted the object of his affection into some high Aiden deemed too hallowed for his plebeian footsteps to approach. This lack of moral courage, in one of such superhuman bravery in real danger, was a new and astounding quality to the girl. While such modest demeanor might flatter the maiden's pride, it sorely taxed her patience, and threatened to imperil her happiness.

Was ever a high-born maiden placed in a more conflicting quandary? While Lawrence's affection was unquestionably strong and fervent, she had observed that in the exact ratio in which his love had deepened in intensity and refined with its growth, he had become abashed and lost heart — like some religious zealot who had aspired to possess a star.

Lucia well knew that her brave sailor-boy would hesitate at nothing deemed commendable — an inherent nobility imbued with oceanic grandeur, acquired while battling with mad winds and storm-lashed waters. Yet, alas! why should one so endowed with daring quail before the rank and beauty of a girl who loved him so well?

Well might the girl's blue eyes dissemble, and hide beneath their long lashes, lest their telltale glances should disclose her tempestuous love — so impatient for a claimant. Well might she seek to abate the enticing cadence of her alluring voice, lest she bare to nudity the quivering emotions of her heart. But underlying all Lucia's coy plans to instill courage into her tardy lover, there existed a purpose fixed as adamant to secure the man she loved; though she were compelled to bare her heart to the utmost limits — meet for a high-born girl.

At the latest moment before the coming separation, should it require such diplomacy on the following night, Lucia had determined to demand a private interview with her lover, upon the plea — happily reserved for the occasion — of hearing his version of the battle. During the recital, if she could escape the impertinent crowd, she would make opportunity to tell Lawrence the history of her love, and the aspirations of her heart — if he cruelly compelled her to force the rapture of being won by the person who possessed her love.

After a late dinner, a select party of the Earl's friends gathered out upon the balcony to enjoy the evening, and scan the vast panoramic view of the harbor and the Chung Land coast beyond. It was the night before the ambassador's official reception, the last private sociable of the Seymours ere sailing for England. A warm quiet twilight. The faint sea-airs came fluttering up from the tranquil bay on wings too languid to waft the rose-pollen a-wooing.

The evening shadows gathered mysteriously down over the harbor, coming from we know not where, steal-

ing out from under the cliff and creeping stealthily along the shore in a thief-like way caught from the noiseless fast-boats, which came like ghosts with the darkness, but are made conspicuous by their absence during the day.

Sir Michael, as usual, was the oracle of his party. Sitting at the central aperture of the balcony, smoking and yarning, the old veteran was describing a sea-fight in Nelson's time to the gentlemen gathered about his chair. He was intentionally oblivious of Lawrence and Lady Lucia, who sat by themselves, together with little Lord Monk, a juvenile midshipman from the flagship, and a relative of the Seymours.

The trio were seated at the east end of the balcony, fairly well hidden from the party by a cluster of dwarf fruit trees, which were nicely adapted to the purpose. Lord Monk was a manly, pretty little lad of fifteen, so fond of cousin Lucia that he was usually found at her side, privileged to cling fast to one of her dimpled hands, as he was now doing. The boy was easily diverted, and made the best of foils for the lovers, partly because he was almost as fond of Captain Lawrence as of his cousin.

The lovers sat face to face near the vine-clad aperture, their soulful eyes feasting upon each other, fairly well satisfied to communicate by roguish smiles and intelligent glances. That his diminutive Lordship should not be made to feel *de trop* he was adroitly induced to tattle about everything which he saw in the bay.

In the midst of the youth's nautical prattle, the welcome darkness shut down, spangling the busy harbor

with starlit sheen, and providentially making the balcony too dark to distinguish with what alacrity the impatient hands of the lovers had become clasped in loving embrace.

Twilight is a blessed boon for reflective souls. An auspicious time for a saint's repentant moods to gather about, like a convocation of departed ghosts. But it is an hour when lovers are blest with a double sense of existence — an hour when the sturdy oak proffers its support, and the clinging vine seeks to clamber.

When night ushered in the darkness, how quickly the lovers found it convenient to sit closer and closer, so close that both could lean out of the same aperture, without in the least incommoding the dainty midshipman, over beyond Lady Lucia. Countless harbor lights were now added to the twinkling stars seen reflected in the dusky bay. The ear was attracted and soothed by the far-down rustling waters which lapped the cliff during the restless whirl of the tide, a well-meant, unobtrusive murmur, all-sufficient to mask a subdued love-word of proper import, whispered tenderly into the maiden's over-anxious ear.

All that clasped hands and pulsating fingers could accomplish was done, seeking to blend two loving hearts as well as the ghostly darkness and an intrusive midshipman would permit. True, one little head would have loved dearly to recline upon a manly breast, but that Lord Monk — a precious cousin — could not be sent rudely away. Though the tongues of the lovers were mute as the stars, yet the speechless voices of the black silence were made to prattle like springtime birds when mating for the year.

Never was there a more auspicious time for wooing. Never were human hearts more susceptible to loving than these. The moon was about "to full," blending the benign influence of the lunar orb with the friendly darkness and the murmuring tide, — a heaven-sent moment, requiring neither linguistic art nor prolonged endeavor to win. Alas, alas! that one little sentence should have failed to be vocalized, creating joy so ethereal in a maiden's heart that heaven's angel-choir would have sung hallelujah for lovers so deserving of bliss.

Suddenly a gleam of moonlight stole in through the lattice chinks and the interlacing vines, fringing the black shadows with a tremulous ruffling of gold-beams, and flecking the head and face of the brown-haired maiden and the patrician boy with a quivering radiance of amber. The spying moon had crept slyly above the snow-crest of the far-away mountain, for a purpose best known to herself — for celestial orbs and angel eyes are ever interested in lovers. With the startling flush of light the clasped hands, which had seemed love-linked forever, were separated with undeniable haste, and quickly made visible to the diminutive man-of-war's-man, lest his juvenile tongue should tattle to a whole fleet of tattlers on shipboard. Thus a tender little heart of exquisite texture failed to be wooed and won, because of a midshipman and a moonbeam.

The sudden accession of the lunar orb brought the Earl and his party around the lovers to seek a glimpse of the newly risen moon. The slant rays of the great yellow orb streaked the harbor with long narrow stripes of gold, for so numerous were the masts of the great

warships, together with those of the merchant fleet, that they obstructed the yellow sheen with endless shadows, black as the pirate flag of Ching Along.

It was a weird sight to see the countless sampans flitting across the glittering streaks of light, the sails casting black shadows which appeared ghostly and strange during the brief minutes while the small craft were in view.

A signal was now piped from the Invincible's boat, which had just arrived at the Cliff Stair ready to take the Admiral on board. Sir Michael at once notified Lawrence to take leave of the company and make ready to embark in the waiting boat. Lucia and the Earl accompanied the departing guests to the broad stair, where they greeted and parted for the night. As all of the party had cards for the reception they would meet for the last time on the following day. Sir Michael and Lawrence were urged by the host and hostess to come early, and both promised to comply.

It was so pleasant a night without, that Lawrence was tempted to walk home; but the Admiral objected, as he wished his company down the Cliff Stair. This deep damp rent in the rock was shrouded in dark shadow, and was so pokerish a place in the night-time that the Admiral was tempted to pipe his whistle and call up some of his men for a body-guard; for it was an ill-omened place where many assassinations had occurred. But as Sir Michael had his rapier and Lawrence was armed with two navy revolvers, the old veteran took heart, and the two seamen locked arms and groped their way down, stair by stair, resting a minute for breath at

the occasional landing place, and were soon seated in the boat.

Not much time was permitted for talk while pulling to the jetty, where the two friends parted for the night.

CHAPTER X.

LOVE INVOKED BY PRAYER.

IT was the evening of the final drawing-room at the British Embassy, given by the Earl of St. Clare the night before sailing for England, after his successful diplomatic mission to settle trade difficulties with China.

As the twilight hour dropped down over the Island City, Lady Seymour left her chamber and came out upon the balcony to cool her flushed face, and endeavor to abate the unusual trepidation which disturbed her. Captain Lawrence had promised to come early, yet it now lacked but an hour of the time appointed for the assembling of the guests, and he had not appeared. Her Ladyship knew that the Admiral and his officers were to be entertained at Captain Drinker's, and that Lawrence would feel obliged to remain at dinner until Sir Michael chose to leave. Yet it saddened her to think that her uncle should be so heartless as to rob her of the last and only free hour that she could give her lover.

Though the young couple had frequently met at the embassy since their first meeting on the flagship, yet, as we have seen, it rarely happened that they had prolonged opportunities for wooing. At such times Lady Lucia had often expressed a wish that at some future meeting

Lawrence would relate the incidents of the pirate fight, yet he had never been invited to do so; and at length it became evident that the story was always purposely kept back for some unaccountable reason.

To the frank, straightforward Captain, such pretty feminine tactics were as mysterious and *outré* as the flitting cat's-paws of a calm sea. Not being versed in the admissible and adroit maneuvers of the fair sex, Lawrence could not comprehend the profound diplomacy of this, the fairest of them all. Manlike, he was too obtuse to discover that Lady Lucia was purposely gaining time, making opportunity for her timid lover to acquire confidence in himself, and leisurely learn to climb the imperial heights whereon he had placed the object of his love. Thus it remained a puzzle to the noble mariner why the story, which he was ever ready to tell and she so willing to hear, must always be put off until —

"Your next visit, Captain, which must be very soon. You'll promise that we shall not wait long, won't you? Come to-morrow, and lunch with us. If not, be sure and come to dinner with Uncle Seymour. Now I think of it, papa wishes to learn those daring moves of yours at chess, which he says are so characteristic of the man," after which they would exchange very tender partings.

Thus Lady Lucia's kittenish ways were kept up during many a happy visit, and Lawrence daily gathered renewed assurance that he possessed the girl's affection, though the precious knowledge failed to advance him a step toward the ultimate result. So unused was the dazed fellow to the high-toned courtesies and ladylike

ways of a patrician girl, that at times he was fain to believe that the angelic creature was practicing the least bit of coquetry — an art almost pardonable in the butterfly beauties of less exalted rank. But Lawrence's mind was easily disabused of such notions by Lucia's daily good-bys; for her last hand-touch at parting, and the delicious glances of her glad blue eyes ere he descended the stairs, could not fail to re-assure the abashed lover, and make it plain to his keen apprehension that if he dared to essay the lofty vault, there was a very heaven of happiness in store for him.

After weeks of such delicious love-lessons, Lady Seymour was now about to meet her lover for the last time. What wonder that she was anxious and unnerved while contemplating the vital import of the coming meeting! The crush and confusion of a diplomatic reception could not prove a suitable place for a young hostess to isolate herself for the purpose of love-making; thus the girl was vexed and dismayed by the unaccountable delay of her lover.

After long watching through the deepening twilight for the Admiral's boat, a neighboring clock struck the hour previous to that of the reception. Lady Lucia was startled as if the cruel bell had struck the knell of her love — if not her life. With a low outcry of grief she fell upon her knees, impelled by the conviction that she must now seek aid from the heavenly source as never before.

Lucia was accustomed to appeal to the heavenly Father during all the momentous events of her life, and never doubted but a willing ear would be turned earth-

ward at her call. She not only found sweet solace in prayer, but a never-failing guidance during every crisis of her existence. She now pleaded earnestly and piteously that her God would make one more opportunity for her lover, and instill the needed courage into the noble heart upon whom her future happiness depended.

Kneeling in the attitude of utmost entreaty at one of the eastern apertures, the wavy motions of her willowy form could be distinguished through the dusky evening, swaying with the gentle undulation of long grasses when touched by the summer breeze. It was a touching, a sacred scene; one to call down the kindred spirits from the sky, and induce her sister angels to tread softly during such earnest supplications from a maiden. It was a prayer intoned to melody by the subject and the occasion. A girl's sweet confession to the All-Wise, in which she besought her God to link one dear name with eternal Love — human and divine.

While Lady Lucia was invoking the divine blessing, the full-orbed moon rose into a cloudless sky, serene and bright as the face of a god. Stealing higher and higher into the heavens, the night-queen leaned lovingly out over the prayerful maiden with almost a lover's tenderness, listening with bended ear and hushed heart-beat to catch the spiritual response to her questionings. Peering inquisitively down upon the kneeling girl, the great solemn-faced orb became dumb and silent at the seraphic expression of a human face while thus appealing for love.

Lucia rose from her knees and passed into the chamber to complete her final toilet before the coming hour.

She who was not accustomed to deck her person to attract the eye of man, now stood irresolute before her mirror, wondering what shade of fabric or fashion of jewels would best pleasure the man she loved. The task was unsatisfying, for the motives were conflicting; and she ended by discarding all attempt at display of showy robes or jeweled decorations.

At length she dressed in rich, plain attire, lest by her courtly vesture and undue brilliance she might remind Lawrence too visibly of her high station in life. Thus, modest colors and simple raiment became her final aim, with no other adornment than a cream-colored rosebud in her hair, to remind her beloved of the first gift she made him when they met on the flagship.

Bidding Irene and the tire-woman to retire until it was time for the guests to arrive, Lucia contemplated going out upon the balcony to allay her agitation and collect her thoughts. While standing before her mirror in an absent, introspective mood, clutching the loved image of her sailor-boy to her heart, and unconsciously murmuring sweet words of welcome for his ear, the fair girl was suddenly startled, if not appalled, by what seemed Lawrence's manly reflection in the glass, so visibly had his beloved face been impressed on her mental retina. As the eye may watch a skylark rise into the high empyrean, and continue to see it long after it has receded from view.

Trifling as was the circumstance, it served to encourage and delight Lady Seymour — as the gentle sex are much given to seeing omens in thistle-down and shadows — and it so revived and elated her for the time that

she felt sure all might yet go well. The novel event imparted such girlish ecstasy that Lady Lucia proceeded to pantomime a warm welcome in mock reception of her tardy lover, whom she had been in doubt just how to receive since his cruel disappointment.

When at length the hour appointed for the guests to assemble chimed from the church tower, Lucia's heart went down like a falling rocket, and the last vestige of roses went out of lips and cheeks. Except for the upheaval of her palpitating bosom, and the quivering of her nether lip, the pale girl might have been taken for a statue fresh hewn in marble. Yet she was a breathing statue, all aglow with newly imparted soul, and tremulous with the concentrated emotions of life.

The Earl now sent Irene to ask her mistress to come to him, and be ready to receive their guests. For the last time the agitated girl turned to her pier-glass before responding to her father's call, never with so little satisfaction in her personal charms and rich attire. Yet to all other eyes there was an innate loveliness and daintiness about Lady Seymour — robed in any garb — which never failed to fascinate all who beheld her.

The girl's queenly carriage and classic features ever held one perplexed with mingled emotions. As when one dwells too long upon the Melian Venus admiration deepens into awe, for one seems to behold an exquisite embodiment of life not made with hands; so upon this night, the rare maiden seemed too ethereal and pure and beautiful to be subjected to the indignities and passions of the world.

CHAPTER XI.

RECEPTION AT THE EMBASSY.

AMONG the first to arrive at the embassy were the incumbents of the three principal Consulates, the English, French, and American, who came with their ladies and friends. Then came the city officials of Victoria, followed somewhat later by Governor Dinsmore and his staff, accompanied not only by their ladies, but by numerous other fair women from Kow-Loon.

Among the most important personages of the last group was Lady Dinsmore, who, were it not considered too personal to estimate her by bulk, was deemed a trifle more than two and a half of the fussy little Sir John, though he was tricked out in his cumbersome uniform for the occasion.

Lady Seymour stood by the Earl, bestowing her whole attention upon the special business of the moment: receiving their guests with the hearty welcome for which the urbane old Earl was noted. One by one they received a cordial greeting, and passed on into the drawing-room, without let or hindrance of any kind, until the stupendous wife of the governor came bowling down in the wake of the pygmy official before her. Alas, that this huge galliot should deem it commendable to exhibit her grace and agility to the crowd by embracing Lady Lucia with her ponderous arms. Poor girl!

for a long anxious minute she disappeared from the sight of mortal eyes, smothered in furbelows and laces, and swallowed up in the gross adiposis as if absorbed forever. Strange as it may seem, the dainty little hostess at length appeared intact, and not much the worse for the encounter, though the color of her face was unduly augmented by the occasion.

An hour passed, and eighty guests were grouped here and there about the audience-room, while most of the dear feminine tongues were glibly debating the absence of the Admiral and Captain Lawrence, judiciously concluding that there must have been a break in the pretty romance in which one and all were so greatly interested.

Lady Seymour could not fail to comprehend the awkward situation, and her mortification was more than she could bear. She became apprehensive lest Captain Lawrence might be wholly deterred from coming, and she be compelled to sail for England without an interview. Her color came and went, and her heart became so greatly oppressed that, had there not been a pause in the arrivals, she would have left her father to receive by himself.

At length the Admiral's boisterous voice was heard upon the stairs, and the bibulous official soon made his appearance, arm in arm with Captain Walsh, his flag-captain, followed by Lawrence, among a number of distinguished naval officers. Lady Lucia's heart leaped, as if it were bent upon taking wing and flying to her lover. Then came a revulsion of feeling, when she was confronted by the question how she ought to receive the delinquent fellow; and paler than the snow-crest of

Fujiama were her cheeks when she saw that the man whom she loved better than all the world was really approaching her.

The exquisite sense of coquetry which is developed in all women during their effusive days of wooing comprises a cunning system of diplomacy worthy of a statesman. Now, when her tardy lover suddenly stood before her, all Lady Lucia's playful speeches in dulcet tones and winsome manner, matured and embellished before her mirror in welcome of her lover, had been made null and void by his non-appearance at the appointed hour.

While Sir Michael was greeting the Earl, and nodding roguishly to his niece, his attention was called to Lucia's unusual agitation. The ancient mariner at once divined the reason, and adroitly suffered the naval officers of rank around him to come forward to be received, and pass on among the guests. Then, beckoning to Lawrence to come forward, the cunning old seaman purposely blocked the way against the reception of others of inferior importance by holding the Earl's attention with an apparent show of official business.

When Lawrence advanced to greet Lady Lucia, and took the ice-cold hand which she proffered him, and witnessed the anxiety and pallor depicted on her face, it awoke his solicitude and aroused his self-assertion on the instant. He at once demanded that the crowd should stand back and give Lady Seymour more air. His loving sympathies were couched in tender tones, which reverberated through her tremulous heart as the matchless echo of the Taj Mahal vibrates over the Jumna. Her lover's gentle tones and affectionate

glances, together with the warm pressure of his hand, brought back the truant blood to Lucia's face, and the proud English peeress was found tongueless no more.

Having permitted Captain Lawrence to linger a few precious minutes beside the fair girl, long enough to make his excuse for tardiness and quiet Lucia's disturbed mind, the big-hearted Admiral came forward and took Lawrence by the arm, and led him into the great concourse of people, many of whom had previously expressed a wish to become acquainted with his *protégé*.

In an assemblage of veteran officers gathered from the army and navy of England — where valor is a national heritage — an untitled hero, coming from the civilian ranks of commerce, must have achieved great deeds and attained to rare merit to be commended with unanimity of praise by such scarred veterans in both arms of the service.

Women are even more susceptible to the influence of martial deeds than men. They so readily surround a chivalrous soul with the halo of virtues usually linked to valor, that a hero's brave acts become his best accessory in beguiling the affections of the fair.

After most of the guests had arrived, Lady Seymour went among the people, and soon became the center and soul of the company. She sang and played an hour for a musical group gathered about the British grand, placed in the center of the room, until her rich voice and rare instrumental skill drew the best part of the assembly about her.

Having thus given an incentive to the numerous singers and players present, the talented young hostess

adroitly withdrew from the musicale, and soon after appeared among a gathering of noble authors, about whom were clustered an intellectual coterie discussing literature and art. Even here Lady Lucia was at her ease, and she easily contrived to impart new zest to the subject in hand by permeating the exalted theme with her spirituality and feminine intuition — elements often as searching and incisive as man's profoundest reasonings.

Lady Seymour's intellectual training and sometime tuition, under the watchful care and supervision of the Earl, had had the effect to broaden her scope of vision and deepen her penetration, until her grasp of all the great interests of life, whether national, intellectual, or individual, was something to astonish and delight the distinguished literati, into whose long-winded, prosaic expositions the brilliant girl had burst like a heaven-sent meteor. Withdrawing from their midst, Lucia left the cultured group a new topic to ponder and classify, for the mental acumen of a versatile woman is as difficult to dissect and characterize as are the component parts of the above sky-born explosive to which we have likened her.

Seeking another class of the mixed congregation, where the various amusements of society tricks and frivolous games, invented for the mediocral mind, had grown dull to the tired votaries, Lady Lucia prompted some new incentive to mirth, and soon left the fun-loving group blessing her for her brightness and condescension.

At length the ubiquitous girl appeared in a more remote part of the room, toward which her eager heart

had long since trended, where she found Uncle Seymour and her lover overlooking a profound game of chess, played by the Earl and the Governor, both of whom had been thoroughly beaten by Captain Lawrence during the evening.

With a roguish smile and a fond greeting, Lady Lucia insinuated her slight form between the two onlookers, and took an arm of each, determined that no mortal power should dispossess her for the present. Her glad face showed something more than contentment now that she could rest an arm on the two, with the precious privilege of being very near the one she loved.

After a while Lord Monk came and found her out, and playfully endeavored to wedge himself in between the lovers. But the argus-eyed Admiral discovered the diminutive middy, and ordered him away, with a mock threat of mast-heading the dainty little fellow if he became unruly in his august presence.

At the thoughtful suggestion of Sir Michael, prompted with a deal of pantomimic nods and gesticulations, Lady Lucia was induced to seek quiet and rest in some secluded part of the room, and Captain Lawrence could not do otherwise than escort the fair lady whither she wished. Dumb with delight, the happy pair wandered away in the vain quest of solitude in a crowd, but glad beyond measure to be together.

Seated upon a divan, apart by themselves, the lovers were prepared to make the most of their interview, and partake to their fill of the sweet ecstasies of love. Lady Lucia was intent upon giving Lawrence a final opportunity to declare his affection. With clasped hands

they sat gazing lovingly upon each other, tongueless as mutes. It was a momentous moment! Lucia's soul was aflame with impatience, and her agitated young heart fluttered like the broken wing of a bird, in anticipation of the coming request which was to make her weal or woe.

Suddenly an impatient gesture from Lucia drew Lawrence's attention to the tall, lank figure of Lord Hertford. His Lordship was approaching with some sinister purpose against his cousin, made evident by the fierce twirl which he was imparting to the fiery points of his waxed mustache.

Hertford was the fop and bore of the English fleet. Disliked and feared for his capricious acts and self-sufficiency, — qualities ever begot by cowardice, — he was reviled in public and ridiculed in private by the junior officers for his insipid manners and twaddle talk. He had long been a thorn in Lucia's side, but, being a cousin of the Seymours, she felt compelled to tolerate his presence on all occasions, and she had often defended his Lordship from the derision of his juniors. Lucia's apparent kindness had acquired a double meaning in Hertford's shallow mind, until he assumed that her public attention showed a preference capable of being construed into an enduring affection.

The flag-lieutenant boastingly informed his boon companions that her Ladyship was only making use of the American Captain as a foil, by which to compel his Lordship to propose for her hand. Some degree of countenance was given to this assumption, during the evening, by Hertford's impertinence in several times

separating his cousin from the companion of her choice; acting under the pretense of inducing Lady Seymour to sing or play at the request of some distinguished guest.

This effrontery and want of tact had at length become unendurable, and Lady Lucia was now prepared to give his Lordship a sturdy denial, whatever his requests might be.

With a haughty bow to Lawrence, Hertford advanced and confronted his cousin with an insipid smile, as he addressed her: "Augh! me pet cousin, indulging the Yankee Captain in another private confab, eh? 'Fraid you two people might talk out and bore each other. So I kindly suggested to Gov. Dinsmore that a little of your sweet soprano might take some of that dem baritone's 'Rude Boreas' out of a fellow: and Sir John asked me to hunt you up. Permit me to escort you to the piano, me lady." And he proffered his arm.

"I think not, Hertford. I have played and sung quite enough for one evening. Your Lordship should be satisfied to let some one else amuse you for a while."

"Demme! but what will the Governor say to your Ladyship's refusal?"

"I don't think his Excellency had anything to do with it. It's your own affair."

"Augh, indeed! You quite surprise me, me lady. Questioning the vewacity of a Hertford, eh?" And the fop twirled his mustache with rising ire.

"Hertford, did the Governor truly send, requesting me to sing?"

"True,' pon 'onor, *ma belle.*" And he again offered his arm, as he saw Lady Lucia was relenting.

"Then if Captain Lawrence will kindly excuse me for half an hour, I suppose I should comply. But it is most unkind of you, Hertford, to drag me into notice again to-night." Turning to Lawrence after she had taken Hertford's arm, she said, "Will you not accompany us, Captain, and sit where you can more easily catch the rendering of my low notes? I will sing your American favorite, 'Rocked in the Cradle of the Deep,' for my last song."

Though full of indignation at the rude interruption, Lawrence smiled and bowed assent to Lady Lucia's request. With a clouded brow, he walked by her side till they reached the piano. Taking his station against one of the fluted columns of the room, where he could retain a profile view of the singer, Lawrence stood with folded arms drinking in every note which fell from Lucia's lips, entranced by the tremulous intonation of her song.

Alas! the enchanting pathos of her singing so exalted the singer in his ardent conception that Lawrence saddened with the oft-obtruding thought that it was a gross wrong for him to aspire to one so cultured and exalted in rank. While the last words of the bewitching sea-song yet lingered on her tongue, Lady Lucia looked around with a beaming face for the approval of but one person in all that concourse of admiring friends.

Lord Hertford saw the exchange of glances passed between the lovers, and grew purple with rage. Laying his hand almost rudely upon the arm of the singer, as she sought to rise at the close of the song, he persistently begged Lucia to sing something more to his liking ere

she retired. With tears in her eyes, Lady Seymour reluctantly gave way, and sang the song which the brutal fellow demanded, vividly recollecting her father's saying, "God has inflicted Hertford upon us to chastise the overweening pride of the Seymours."

For nearly half an hour Lady Lucia was detained against her wishes, pleasuring this man. While yet the encores of the guests invaded her ears, she sprang up and turned to meet her lover; but Lawrence had disappeared. As we have seen, the sensitive sailor became heart-sick at the temerity of wooing one so far above him — above any man born of woman. He was, withal, just a trifle indignant with the fair girl herself, whom he had seen yield too easily to the further importunities of the hated Hertford. In such a mixed state of mind, Lawrence had hastily retreated with a bitter resolution not to again obtrude upon Lady Seymour. Stalking across the room to a group of naval officers, who had frequently importuned him to relate some of his sea experience, he thrust himself into their midst, and soon had the intelligent seamen eagerly listening to his perilous adventures.

When the keen-eyed girl searched the room she was not long discovering her lover, though he was almost hidden from view. With the quick intuition of her sex, Lucia comprehended the mental condition of the foiled man at a glance. A cold shudder crept over her lest she should now lose her loved friend forever. Her mind swept over their whole brief acquaintance, and gathered up the broken links of their disjointed evening's intercourse.

Throughout the evening, however much Lucia apparently followed the direction of others, she nevertheless secretly managed to play and sing wholly for Lawrence, touching chord after chord in the noble soul of her best of lovers. And though Lawrence subsequently confessed that she had thrilled him to the core with her deft touch of minstrelsy and song, yet the alert girl perceived that each new charm which she displayed did but waft her away from his middle level of life, wherein the abashed man dared to aspire for her love.

An audible exclamation of grief and disappointment escaped the proud young peeress, and her looks and acts were sad to behold. While she stood weighing her perplexities, tearful and irresolute, endeavoring to keep down her rising grief, and smother her indignation against Hertford for his part in the affair, his Lordship came forward and proffered his services, and courteously asked Lady Lucia to take a turn with him on the balcony; saying, with a sardonic grin of satisfaction — if not derision — upon his face, as Lucia took his arm, —

"Augh, me sweet! Come, I have something of special interest for your ear. Never mind that Yankee Captain; he isn't worth a thought from one of our rank. There's been too much pow-wow about that small affair of his. I weally wish I might have been there, just to show the world what a Hertford could accomplish. Augh, me belle Coz! that fellow is *nullius filius*, you know."

Perhaps never in the history of love and hate was a sweet young face so suddenly transformed with disgust and ire. When Lady Seymour dropped the Lieutenant's arm — which she had taken with avidity that he might

escort her to where Lawrence had retreated — the silent speechless scorn of the Ludovici Juno was impressed on the face and form of the insulted maiden.

Scorn, fiery, flashing scorn, gleamed in her deep blue eyes — usually so soft and serene — as she threw her graceful figure into its tallest, grandest poise, while Hertford was delivering himself of his cruel philippic. In tones tremulous with passion, and words withering and incisive, Lucia replied, —

"Sir, merit ever wins its own high meed in the world. Know you not that the baying of a thousand aristocratic curs cannot dim the luster of the moon? My Lord Hertford! rank is a heritage which may chance to fall to a poltroon and a fop, as we well know. Your Lordship ought to be aware, as well as myself and others, that all of our English nobility are not noble. Some whom we have recently met are so paltry-hearted — so shallow-brained — as to disrate one of Nature's noblemen, and that too in his absence, and behind his back! Fie upon you, Lord Hertford! for a coward and a knave. I abhor and detest you as I would a snake. Get you gone from my presence!"

"Augh, I beg your pardon, me belle cousin. I had been unwilling until this minute to believe that your Ladyship weally cared for this untitled personage — this demmed Yankee Captain, of unknown birth."

"Untitled and unknown, indeed! Who knows of the existence of your mighty Lordship, except as a blot upon the peerage? Cannot my Lord comprehend that hereditary titles are but straws to uphold the vanity of fops and fools? Lord Hertford may indulge in what

belief he pleases about my likes and dislikes, if he will never again err about the latter sentiment, or intrude upon the attention which other gentlemen may choose to bestow upon me."

"Demme! I'll not meddle in this confounded business again if I see you going to ruin. But, weally, there's altogether too much ado made about this pirate-killing gentleman — this 'Nature's nobleman,' indeed!"

"That may be your egotistical opinion, Hertford, but it is not the avowed construction put upon his acts of heroism by your betters, among all classes. None knew better than your Lordship that it was not native courage or deeds of valor which induced the Admiralty to confer upon you the first lieutenancy of uncle's flagship."

"Augh! by St. George of England, Lucia, you're growing too hard on a fellow of my standing in the navy. I'll not stand here and be insulted before this noble company, all on account of a dem Yankee, demme if I will. If you were a noble Lord, I would call you out and fight you, or thrash you on the spot."

"Softly! most august Peer of the Realm. If you but ask me, I will mention the names of five brother lieutenants who have challenged you without result; and of more than one Yankee Captain who has thrashed you in the bowling alleys — once for insulting the American Consul — when you lost every king's button on your coat. Most noble cousin! will you indeed promise not to run, if I will produce a brace of pistols?"

"Lucia, I hope the devil may sink you and your Yankee in the bottom of the sea!"

And Lord Hertford bowed himself away with a half

haughty, half ashamed air; sneaking abruptly from the room, for the laughter and innuendoes of the people began to reach his ear, till he became alarmed for his safety; either from fear of fighting a duel with Lady Lucia, or of being kicked from the room by some who threatened to stop his further rudeness. Few men can withstand the virtuous onslaught of a woman, for none other can so readily dwarf a cowardly, foppish man, until he becomes amazed at his own insignificance.

After lightning comes the rain. With tearful eyes Lady Seymour turned to the piano for relief, playing a quick stirring air, with the touch of a Melpomene; endeavoring to drown the just hatred and indignation lingering in her soul. Admiral Seymour soon heard of the brave lashing which his loved niece had inflicted on the Lieutenant, and hastened, with his fat sides shaking with jollity, to learn the cause.

In the April days of girlhood, a briny shower of maiden-tears are never far distant from vernal sunshine. By the time Lady Lucia had composed herself, and become serene and self-reliant, she turned to look about her in time to meet the rubicund face of Sir Michael, who was bowling down before a gale of fun and frolic, with colors flying from truck to peak in admiration of the recent engagement, in which the lesser craft proved her superior gunnery over the cumbersome three-decker.

While Lucia was furiously thrumming the piano to hide her grief and confusion, she solved the problem with regard to Lawrence. The Seymour element had effervesced and cleared the air, and now Lucia's aroused soul coveted some desperate task of courage to test her

endurance. Before the fracas with Hertford, Lucia well knew the strength of her affection for her lover; but she did not know until now how much contumely she would endure to win him, and show the strength of her affection to the world.

Playfully seizing upon the Admiral's arm, as he approached, Lucia frankly told him, in few words, all that had happened in presence of the company; and received his hearty praise for what she had done. Then, with a bland and courtly smile, she bowed to the gaping crowd, and requested the big-eared people to withdraw from about her, and leave her a minute's privacy with Admiral Seymour. When free from curious ears, Lucia told her uncle her despair of success, and her determination to attempt any proper thing which might win Lawrence's love; ending her plea by saying, —

"Moreover, uncle, you must not permit one of your quizzing officers to intrude a minute during the interview on the balcony. Do you understand, you best of uncles? I am going to test your love to-night as never before."

"Ay, ay, little darling! Trust to me till the ship goes down. I'll stand guard with a lady's bodkin, ready to repel boarders should so much as a cat's paw steal out upon the balcony. So heave ahead, and save wind and tide."

"Many thanks, you good old dear. You shall have lots of kisses if you remain true to your colors to-night. Now let us go and snatch Captain Lawrence from that snarl of lieutenants and midshipmen, among whom he has immured himself."

"Come on, noble lassie! But just what is your plan of attack?"

"Any plan that you may suggest. For, since Hertford has disclosed my love to the whole concourse of his companions, I am equal to any emergency. But the sum total of the plan is: I must make prize of the man, and escape with him to the balcony. So, uncle, see that you level a broadside at the first person who says nay to this piece of strategy."

"Certainly, my pet robin! Your Uncle Seymour will take off his coat to the first impudent Briton who don't make a clear coast for my darling. So, lassie, smooth your ruffled plumage and make ready to board in the smoke, sword in hand. Do you know, Lucia, that I love the youngster all the better for carrying his sail so modestly in an *affaire du cœur* with a lady of your rank?"

"Oh, thank you, uncle, for every kind word spoken of him. The quality which you speak of has also endeared him to me. I much fear that the noble fellow has heard some of Hertford's derisive remarks about his attention to me, so, in chastising his Lordship, I trust that I have put down all his saucy clique together."

"Well, *nous verrons, ma belle* Lucia!"

As these two noble craft — of such unequal tonnage — quietly approached the officers gathered about Lawrence, one of their number discovered the Admiral, and exclaimed, —

"Make way, gentlemen! Make way for Lady Lucia and Admiral Seymour."

The circle opened quickly to receive the new-comers, who passed in, bowing and smiling to all. The Admiral led his niece directly to the object of their search, almost

rudely intent upon his purpose, while Lady Lucia blushingly responded to the courtly greetings of all, ending by a more deliberate explanation of her purpose, —

"Thanks, gentlemen and friends. But you may not deem that we deserve your welcome when the object of our intrusion is known. We come, gentlemen, to rob you of the central object of your interest and generous encomia, though we admit that none but the brave are so capable of doing just homage to their peers."

Turning to Lawrence, her glad face made crimson with a delicious joy, which sparkled in her eyes and made her voice tremulous with emotion, she addressed him, —

"Captain Lawrence, it is a whole hour since I have spoken with you. May I not now claim your attention for a while?"

"Most certainly, my Lady. It will pleasure me to undertake any service that you may require. In what manner can I serve you?"

"Oh, you have not yet fulfilled your promise about relating the sea fight. The half remains to be told. I wish to take home to Her Majesty, the Queen, a full history of the event from your lips. Shall we walk upon the balcony?"

"Yes, my Lady, if it please you, and the night air prove not too cool over the bay?"

"None too cool for me. I love the sea air at all times, especially when spun with moonbeams as now." Taking Lawrence's arm, while she still retained the Admiral's, she continued, "Uncle says that it takes pretty close questioning to obtain the best part of your story. So, Captain, craving the indulgence of your friends, I

must have you all to myself." Adding with a bit of roguery in her look and voice, at the success of her mission, "Without dear uncle will continue his gallant escort?"

And the overjoyed creature pinched the old man's arm severely — to quicken his wits, and hasten his negative reply — and playfully tapped his corrugated cheek with her sandalwood fan, as she compelled him to reply.

"Come, uncle, it shall be wing-and-wing, if you will go. Only you would make a third party, you know." Her last repartee elicited an uproarious guffaw from the fun-loving seaman, who gladly relinquished his charge to Lawrence, with a parting shot at the fair girl.

"Nay, Lucia, dear, I'm too old a cruiser to double-bank at my time of life, especially with such odds on the port wing. We'll give you an uninterrupted hour to squeeze out that story from the Captain, and I'll see to it that there shall be no intrusion from mortal man."

This nautical retort created a hearty peal of laughter among the lieutenants, in which Lady Lucia joined merrily. Having relinquished her uncle's arm, Lucia clung to Lawrence; and together they sailed majestically through the room, she happy as a bird, with a strong outspoken love illuminating her face. A murmur of approbation filled the assembly — as when the summer breeze fans an Æolian lyre — to witness the handsome pair sweep through the concourse of admiring people.

"Well mated, by Jove!" exclaimed Sir Michael to the Earl as they met, his face beaming with delight. "Two such *rarœ aves* don't often consort. Eh, my Lord George?"

"Truly, Michael, they sail well in couples; graceful as two royal swans in Moorland mere. Lucia seems very happy since her acquaintance with the young American."

"Right, my Lord. And a worthier mariner she'll never find."

"Pity that you couldn't make a naval commander of him, Michael. He'd make his mark in time of need."

"I wish we could. But the fellow has no aspirations for the post. He further asserts that his recent sea-fight was none of his seeking, —a sort of thing that he would neither seek nor avoid. Ay, there's a ring of the true metal about the Captain."

"Admiral," said the Governor, as he came up to join in the conversation, "I am right glad that we gave the Yankee Captain his just dues, for he rightly deserves all we have done for him."

"You are right, Sir John. I have drawn the attention of the Lords of Admiralty to his recent service in our waters. And I hope St. Clare will press the government to take suitable notice of his brave acts."

"I certainly shall draw Lord John Russell's attention to the matter at my first audience — do you know, Dinsmore, that I half think my Lucia has lost her heart to the noble fellow?"

"But your Lordship sails with the morning tide, and they will hardly meet again," replied the Governor.

"Yes, I know, and my daughter may find some one else — perhaps less worthy — to take his place." And the old Earl sighed, while his fond eyes followed the direction which the lovers had taken, as with a deep-seated regret.

"Ah, George, my brother, it does one's old heart good to watch the leap and tingle of such young blood. I think the matter will not end here."

"Why should you think so?" asked Sir John.

"Nothing to hinder Lawrence from going to England when he gives up the sea. He has gobbled up half a million of wealth from that old Spanish galleon. So if my Lord Seymour don't mind his lack of title and notable ancestry, there's no reason why the handsome couple are not well mated."

"You know right well, Michael, that I place high character and noble attainments above hereditary rank and mere distinction of birth. My daughter has ever heard me advocate these axioms; and such sentiments were inculcated by her much loved mother. Aside from this assumption, I am confident that Lucia's keen mother-wit will stand her in good stead in all such matters, and prevent her ever taking a false step until the right person presents — when she can be left to make her own selection."

CHAPTER XII.

THE MYSTERIOUS FAST-BOAT.

OFTEN amidst the happy hours of luxurious wooing at the embassy during the past weeks, Lady Lucia had occasion to doubt the probability of inducing her modest sailor to declare the ultimate expression of his love. But, now, after what had just transpired, she felt herself possessed of the supreme of power, and was in no mood to lose her lover for want of a final *ultimatum* coming from herself, if need be. Lawrence had been suddenly made aware of this new state of things, not only by the air of self-assurance with which Lady Seymour had snatched him from among his chosen companions, but, also, from her more ardent manner, and the soft resonance of her voice, which she artfully deflected in low tones to his ear as she addressed him on their way to the balcony.

"Oh, Captain Lawrence! let me hope that you will forgive me, just this once, for thus purloining you away from such appreciative companions." And there was a tremulous pulsation in her warm breath as it purred against his cheek, which proved the keynote of that which was to follow.

"Indeed, Lady Seymour, I confess to feeling proud that you have selected me from such a brilliant throng of naval men, some of whom were of your own rank."

Unconsciously a slight pressure of their locked arms verified the momentary gratification of both.

As they emerged from the stifled room and glare of light within, Lady Lucia scanned the balcony with a scrutinizing glance, seeking the most suitable nook for the imperative task in hand. But there was no place free from the noisy loiterers, whose curious eyes and listening ears would debar her from giving voice to her overburdened heart. Determined upon her mission, together they approached a central aperture which was encumbered with midshipmen, who quickly made way before the imperious glance of the now haughty peeress; yet, with the consummate impudence of their craft, they remained within earshot of the lovers. Almost, the queenly Seymour was tempted to assume the Admiral's baton of command, and order these embryo warriors off the quarter-deck of her castle.

The night on which this scene transpired was one of transcendent beauty. One to lift the thoughts of man above himself — above all things earthy — into the high empyrean beyond the stars. The Lover's moon was bending over them from a cloudless heaven, dispensing its hallowed light over land and sea, and stealing prayer-like into their receptive souls as whispered benedictions fall from the winged spirits of the sky. It was a heaven-sent moment for Lady Lucia! Most opportune for her desires, for human existence then doubles its life-throbs, — as counted by the radial pulse-beats, — and man's increased susceptibility to loving.

The great yellow orb had rounded to its full, and was nearing its perigee — a phase of lunar attraction subtle

and cruel beyond conception. A planetary era filled with perilous influences for young lovers when pre-occupied with each other; an epoch when reason becomes subservient to instinct and intuition in the youthful soul, from a divine effluence that increases the ardor and affability of timid hearts, which elsewise might stand aloof forever, isolate as hermits, until they construe Love's simplest utterances into glowing hopes that shine like beacon-lights and throbs like stars.

Lawrence and Lady Lucia stood silently contemplating each other in the mellow moonbeams. Two self-conscious souls of special nobleness and beauty; both quivering with emotions, like the throbbing light of the sparkling topaz on the maiden's finger. Though they were both overflowing with unspoken love, they were prevented from speaking freely because of the lingering eavesdroppers, who had so increased that they now occupied every seat in the central part of the gallery.

Wishing to rebuke the rudely encroaching listeners, and better their own condition, the lovers walked to the west end of the balcony, where but few intruders remained, and there leaned out over the balustrade to enjoy the serene beauty of view, with but slight hopes of an opportunity to exchange their vows.

The tidal waves beat in rhythmic cadence against the base of the cliff, far down in the black shadows of the crag, disclosing the muffled heart-beat of the murmuring sea to the awe-inspired listeners above. A light breeze stirred the drooping leaves and pendent vines of the suspended plants, diffusing an agreeable fragrance from fruit and flowers, which the soft airs wafted with

languid wings across the upturned faces of the lovers.

It was a night when the pure-hearted become cognizant of spiritual influences and divine emotions, delicious conceptions too sacred and evanescent for daily food. A time when the unguarded windows of the soul are flung wide, — transmitting and receiving, — when the coyest maiden lifts the lattice bars from off her callow heart and lures the bashful lover into the resistless maelstrom of her love.

That which might never have transpired had our lovers been content to woo amidst the mock allurements of a brilliant drawing-room, cannot fail to be consummated now, when two such rich, rare natures are brought beneath the influence of the resplendent night. The very circumstance of the balcony overhanging the mysterious sea, which is ever voicing itself in mournful echoes from the long-buried past, and easily captivates human lovers by the tuneful whispering of its unseen denizens, deep hidden in the tumultuous depths, becomes an unfailing accessory to enhance the power of wooing.

Neither all men nor all women are dowered like these, so self-poised and self-sustaining, with intensified purposes sufficiently strong and pure to permit them to trample upon the conventionalities that surround them. In the past weeks they had been so intent upon forging Cupid's golden chains that they had ignored the essential requirements of society, forgetful that envious eyes were upon them, until now carping tongues were heard murmuring at the sweet solicitude which they expressed for each other. One of the delinquents was deemed too

aspiring for his plebeian birthright; the other was thought too condescending for a person of such exalted rank.

But it is a law of Nature that her loftiest mountains are the greatest centers of heat and dispensers of warmth to the low-down valleys. So there are human souls towering in such sublime grandeur above the mediocre of their kind, that their lives are sufficiently exalted and intensified to endure the test of lifting a rustic lover into the high places of the social world, without marring the superior luster of their escutcheon.

Measured by her wealth, rank, and beauty, Lady Seymour might be deemed the most noted example of such erratic love. But she had carefully delved into her heart, and sublimated her affections, as few could do, until she came to understand herself and her requirements, and learned that, with all her wide experience of men, there was but one person who could endow her with happiness commensurate with her aspirations.

How a girl in her teens could have acquired such knowledge we may fail to portray. But there is an interpreter in the immaculate soul of woman that neither tongue nor pen can impart to another. A shekinah which only the most intuitive of men can detect for themselves. As, while praying in the still small hours of night, man may receive an inarticulate premonition from the ambient spirits which he can only interpret for himself.

Touch the heart of a pure maiden with her first initial love, deeply and tenderly, so there remains no lingering doubt but it is the embryo god-love tendered by her king

of men, and she becomes a page of oracles, a book of songs. Every nerve-fiber in her being vibrates with melody, like a thousand stringed Æolian when touched by the summer breeze.

O man, know you not the sweet mysteries of the drooping lids in such an hour, hiding her languishing eyes, bright in your presence no more? Then your dull ear would not awaken to the rustle of growing corn on a summer's day, nor your dull eye behold the vibrant throbs of the silky stamens, palpitant with the ecstasy of new emotions, and the exquisite love of kind.

Whether a peeress or a peasant, woman comes to you as a guardian angel, yet you dower her as your slave. Oh, brute in human guise! rise up from off the groveling earth, and learn that best joys brighten as you climb. That love is a guerdon to hoard with half the sordid pains which you accord your gold. Like your coin, happiness augments with keeping, and a great love leaves you worse than impoverished by its loss. Though the love of woman exceeds your own, it wears by your gigantic grossness, as a fresh-blown flower once in your grasp falls petal by petal, strewing your ruthless life-path with the perfume of dead loves.

. . . . .

As we have seen, nothing could be more glorious than the panoramic scene lying at the feet of the lovers. Lady Lucia had shown great art and aptitude in choosing the balcony scene as a background for the dramatic interview with Captain Lawrence. Spread out beneath them were the fleets of merchant vessels, foreign and local. Beyond lay the French and English warships,

whose sentinels were seen pacing the gangways and across the bows of the huge craft, their gleaming bayonets flashing in the moonlight as they wheeled back and forth on their tireless guard.

While every indenture along the shore was occupied with countless sampans, the unique water-homes of thousands of Coolie families, between which and the offshore merchantmen were gathered many low, rakish-built fast-boats. Though these craft were rated at the custom house as coasters, they were ostensibly recognized in social parlance as smugglers, and many of them were chartered as such for the convenience of the English opium trade, — a relict of the British East India Company. Elsewhere this would be considered an illicit traffic, here it was forced upon the so-called Barbarians by the bayonets of the enlightened subjects of England's queen.

These fast-boats carried two or three masts, and showed an enormous spread of lateen sails. They were pierced for from fifty to a hundred oars, or sweeps; and, when running under oars and sails, these sometime freebooters were capable of great speed. As smugglers were entitled to go armed, to enable them to enforce their illegal coastwise traffic, wherever a purchaser could be found, their several cannon and other warlike equipments were not necessarily hidden from view.

The mystery attached to these long snakish-built craft ever made them an object of interest and fear among foreigners, as every misdemeanor or act of piracy transacted on the high sea, or along the coast was rightfully attributed to the fast-boats.

Soon after Lawrence and Lucia took their position at the western aperture, one of the largest and most piratical-looking fast-boats attracted their attention, from her extreme nearness to the border-line of sampans. This fast-boat had dropped down the bay with the young flood, having scarcely wind enough to avoid the clumsy junks on the one hand and the trim-built sampans on the other. Fluttering along within pistol shot of the Cliff Stair, the sly craft let go her anchor; and, as she swung head to the tide, the crew tidied up her decks, and at once made her ready to get under way with dispatch.

What most attracted the lovers was a graceful, energetic woman seen in command of the suspicious craft. Dressed in jaunty Spanish apparel, the female captain seemed but a girl in years, though her sharp commands were given with a professional vigor that made the sailors leap to do her bidding. It was nothing strange to see a woman managing the smaller craft in China, as the dominant female on a sampan always takes the helm, or tends the main sheet, and often with an infant slung to her back.

But here was one of the sauciest craft in the harbor in full command of a dashing woman, belted about with pistols like a full-fledged captain. The jeweled hilt of her dagger glittered in the moonlight as she paced the quarter-deck with nervous strides. She was large-statured, and, judging from her free, sinuous motion, was a person of unusual strength. After their curiosity was aroused, the lovers watched the doings on the fast-boat through a night-glass; and when the she captain's face

was turned up to the balcony, with the moon full upon it, it was discovered that she possessed remarkable beauty.

Although the fast-boat was armed with three large cannon, pivoted along the central line of her deck, yet there was no attempt to conceal her armament, or prevent the appearance of a large crew. When summed up, these items presented a most piratical aspect to the nautical eye.

Occasionally the female captain gave some brief order about trivial things, showing a smart degree of discipline among the crew, very rare in vessels of her class. For instance, a rope was heard towing overboard in the swift running tide, the captain gave two simple words of command, and a Spanish sailor came aft with alacrity to do her bidding. True, any woman might order a rope hauled aboard, but few could have done it so imperatively, and, if they had, would not have been obeyed so quickly, if at all.

When the noise and bustle of anchoring were over, the rigging coiled neatly down in Flemish coil, and the vessel made ready for getting under way, a boat was lowered and manned by ten athletic men. The boatmen showed evidence of having arms stowed under their roundabouts, as they were constantly shifting their hidden weapons for personal ease. The boat was evidently made ready for the captain, but she seemed in no haste to make use of it; rather she was waiting for some event to transpire.

Occasionally the captain swept her glass across the bay, from Kow-Loon point northward; but for a time

nothing could be seen in that direction. After a while, Lawrence's attention was attracted by some glittering object across the bay, which soon proved a dim shadowy vessel, whose tall lateen sails gleamed in the moonlight. This new-comer was also a fast-boat, and proved as rakish as the one at anchor. A blue rocket was now sent up from the anchored fast-boat, and was soon after answered in like manner by the approaching vessel. This looked as if the two craft were companions, which proved to be the case, as the female captain made no further delay, but sprang down into the boat alongside, followed by a sprightly sailor boy, who seated himself at the tiller, and acted as coxswain. With a strong, heavy stroke, to head the swift running tide, the armed boat pulled toward the Cliff Stair and disappeared among the sampans in the deep shadow of the precipice, and was seen no more.

CHAPTER XIII.

LADY LUCIA'S BETROTHAL.

MORE than an hour had passed, and Lawrence and Lady Lucia had not yet been able to get rid of the intrusive people upon the balcony, which greatly distressed and annoyed the imperious maiden. The intruders who chanced to saunter back into the drawing-room, on whatever pretense, happily were prevented from returning by the argus-eyed Admiral, who diligently stood guard within; so that little by little the spying crowd had diminished.

Among the few who yet remained, some had innocently approached the lovers with the friendly design of keeping them company; but these were easily deterred from such kind intent by Lady Lucia's ungracious silence and touch of *hauteur*, which induced them to withdraw from her presence. Others had at length rightly interpreted the fond glances of the lovers, and with commendable delicacy withdrew into the assembly, mortified at their prolonged rudeness. At length but one thoughtless young officer remained upon the balcony. But one pair of spying eyes and a tattling tongue were unendurable; for sailors are such proverbial gossips that, in their yarn-spinning moods, they are sure to add a rope-yarn to the delicious tale at every telling.

It was a cruel, a torturous dilemma. The fond girl

sat moodily gazing into the heavens, somber and sad, with feelings of dismay crowding upon her soul. At length, she improvised some of her sweet, sad sentiments into song. Singing ostensibly to the moon, whose seraphic face peered lovingly down into her upturned eyes, Lucia warbled a low, sweet lullaby, in tones just sufficient to reach her lover's ears. As she sang, the words of her appealing bird-song were imperceptibly weighted with heart-throbs, for the girl was dismayed by well-grounded fears of losing her lover, —

"The Moon lies entranced on the billow,
She floods with her gold the blue sea;
She rocks on the waves for a pillow,
As heaveth my bosom for thee!

CHORUS. — Fond loves! the gold moon and blue sea,
Examples for you, Love, and me.

The Orb and the Ocean are a-wooing,
The breeze and the blossoms caress;
'Tis time you and I were a-cooing,
I know you've a joy to confess! CHORUS.

Come, rest on the bosom that loves thee!
Thou knowest I deem thee divine;
Thine eyes do not seem to reprove me,
My lips shall make answer to thine! CHORUS.

Oh, sweet are the joys I have tasted!
Sweet, dear, is the love you impart;
Forgive me the hours I have wasted,
I've learned, near the lips — lies the heart!"

CHORUS.

The words of Lucia's song seemed to end; but to Lawrence's ear their musical echoes would sing on over

wind and waves forever. Before the dying cadence of the song had ceased to mount heavenward along the golden lute-strings of moonbeam — if the melody of such an ecstasy can die when once set a-wing — the conventional barriers that had separated the lovers were gone, and they were now linked as never before.

How and when the exquisite transition took place, even they knew not. But when Lady Lucia's rhapsody had subsided into the softest audible pianissimo, two eager hands were found clasped with visible caressings, prompted by divine emotions which articulate by touches and by tears. When the girl's melodized message of love had floated away over the bay, the last of the tiresome intruders awoke to the *malapropos* of his situation, and hastily retreated into the drawing-room.

Lady Seymour at once gave utterance to her long pent emotions, "Oh, Captain Lawrence! we are left alone at last, for which I thank Heaven from my very soul."

"Yes, dear Lady, it has been most annoying to be so hedged in and spied upon."

"I pray God never to so test my infirmity of temper again. Now, Captain, I must hold you to your promise."

"I shall gladly serve your Ladyship, in any way you may suggest."

"Since your arrival at Hong Kong, your deeds of daring have been the chief topic of interest in all circles: and I, among others, could not keep your valor out of mind for an hour."

"Ah, Lady Seymour, there has been too much ado about that affair."

"It's very becoming of you to say so. But I do so

love to listen to an account of heroic deeds when recounted by the chief participant. As I have questioned the old Duke about Waterloo, during his visits at Moorland Castle; and the heroic Nelson about the battle of the Nile; — so, dear Captain, as we leave for England tomorrow, a little friend of yours would like to take home to the queen a brief recital of your wonderful sea-fight, as recounted by yourself. My uncle insists that your battle stands unparalleled in the history of such combats."

"Dear Lady Lucia, accept my thanks for the opportunity you proffer me. I will portray the fight with what skill I may. But I assure your Ladyship that my part in the bloody transaction has been greatly overestimated; for had not Uncle Joe, my venerable third mate, beheaded the gigantic pirate king, none of us would be here to tell the tale."

"First tell me, dear Captain, about your own exclusive part in the battle — that which lies nearest my heart — and please don't delay the narrative to embellish the deeds of others, as is your custom, at the expense of your own heroic acts."

"Ah, my lady, in a fierce contention like that, where every man was a hero, my individual doings were but a small part of the whole."

"But, my modest friend, Admiral Seymour is much the best judge in such matters — being a professional man of war — and he has repeatedly said that you saved the day. And not only that, but that you fought your best fight while the 'death-swoon' was upon you, a time when most men only think of dying, — and cry out for help."

"Dear me, I feel abashed and debased by the noble Admiral's too partial representation of my doings. Your good uncle alludes to the time when I was stricken down by the terrible sword-cut of the pirate chief, and lay half stunned with the mist of apparent death flitting before my eyes, and with just sufficient presence of mind to wish to deliver a few more blows before dying. The thought of my poor sailors fighting against such great odds, and being cut down about me, had the effect to arouse me from the swoon, until I rallied and delivered twelve successful shots from my revolver.

"After the battle, my old third mate — who is somewhat partial to his captain — took the trouble to ascertain that each of my peculiar-shaped minie balls was lodged in the head or heart of a pirate. While shooting, I lay weltering in my blood, half reclining against the cabin, too nearly blind to take proper aim, and I only thought to fire one or two shots before I expired. But I seemed to have fired rapidly, and with greater precision than could have been expected.

"I well remember to have seen my foes fall at each discharge, which had the effect to brush away the black mist from before my eyes. This circumstance enabled me to dimly see the uplifted cutlass of each advancing foe, and deliver yet another shot in defense of my brave men who persisted in rallying about their wounded captain."

"Oh, you noble man! Tell me, and tell me truly, — as you will relate it to your mother and sister at the home fireside, while they glory over your heroism with pride and affection, — tell me, was there no particle of

fear and trembling in your great heart as you lay ebbing your life away during that terrible slashing and shooting?"

"Oh, no, my lady. I cannot conceive of such feelings intruding upon a brave man in times of action. Besides, do you not see that it would have made my aim unsteady? At no time in my life do I remember to have felt the emotion of fear, as described by others; whether beneath the flashing flukes of a mighty whale, frenzied by fear or maddened by agony, or while under the swift descending cutlass of Ching Along. So, Lady Lucia, perhaps I am not deserving such lavish encomia, by doing what any other brave man would have done in my place."

Lawrence's modest recital of valor crowned the climax of Lucia's love, which had already overwhelmed the bewitching girl. With glowing cheeks and tear-streaming eyes she held out her small patrician hands to her hero of the seas, her soul so burthened with affection that she could restrain herself no longer.

Lawrence caught the little hands, — so graciously outstretched to him in the moment of transport, — and pressed the dainty fingers in his own brown palms, while he unwittingly covered them with kisses. The first greeting of the kind he had dared perpetrate since their acquaintance. Instantly, and without the small measure of coquetry expected of a peasant lass — after a first-time kiss — the proud English nobless stooped and pressed her own red lips again and again upon her lover's brave brown hands. Then, with almost hysterical sobbing, the high-born girl let fall her head upon the

shoulder of her lover, whom she had won in spite of his stubborn resistance.

What wonder that the stars hushed their chimes, and the winds folded their unseen wings, amidst a silence whiter than the moonbeam! Whilst all the elements of nature forgot their occupation for the moment, and hung listening to the whispered benedictions fluttering down from the ambient spirits of the air. If ever God's hand is shown in the affairs of men, the divine Presence presided over this betrothal, and the kiss of angels dwelt upon the brow of the overjoyed maiden.

From that re-assuring moment, Lawrence rose to the level of the occasion. He who had so naïvely asserted his non-acquaintance with cowardice now proffered one more proof of his daring, by folding the regal beauty in his strong arms, and breathing into her ear the exquisite minstrelsy of his love, so welcome and so dear. Eagerly Lady Lucia answered his caresses, while flooded by her own downpouring tears, interjecting every utterance with sobs of wild, exquisite joy.

"Oh, my Lawrence! My hero of the seas! You will not misunderstand me! You must not deem this outburst of love but a wild effusion, born of the moment! Oh, no, no. Believe me, my darling, I have wrapped my very soul about you, like the halo around yonder star. This is a pure, deep affection, worthy of even you. Noble as the time-hallowed House of Seymour can bestow, whose ancient estates I herewith lay at your feet, with my maiden love.

"Tell me, dear Lawrence, again and again, that you truly love me. Repeat it in your own glowing words,

till they become to me a bird-song, which I will treasure in my heart to the end of my being. Tell me that you are sure of your own great heart, and the enduring strength of your affection. That our coming separation of the morrow — if separate we must — shall not blot my image from your soul before we again meet to consummate our affection in the bonds of wedlock."

And, with her dimpled hands upon his face, Lucia held the strong man at arm's length with the forceful energy imparted by her love. Turning his noble lineaments full to the moon, she read for herself his replies to her questionings in the soft gray eyes, — so eloquent and tender in love, so terrible and tempestuous in the smoke of battle.

"O Lucia! my darling girl, as I am not given to timidity in the day of battle, so I am not given to delusion in the hour of love. You must not doubt the strength and integrity of my affection for you. It was born in the moment when we met on the deck of yonder battle-ship, and I placed it among the stars for future worship; never for an instant deeming that I could thus be lifted into love's highest heaven, and be made kindred of the gods."

For a few minutes the half-dazed girl buried her flushed young face in her lover's bosom, and once again felt his strong arms infold her, until heart answered back to heart like the beating wings of imprisoned birds. At length the happy girl raised her head, and let her tear-gemmed eyes dwell upon her lover, as she exclaimed, —

"Tell me more, more! Tell me everything! For I

am like one who has climbed to a mighty mountain-top, and is famishing for very air to breathe. O love! your dear words fall like drops of incense into my deepest soul."

"Oh, my Lucia! how have I found courage to thus aspire to one so beautiful and so pure? One who ranks me, by her birth and her breeding, high as yon star-gemmed heaven soars above the earth. It is you, my glorious creature, who must needs catechize your own heart, weighing well this act, and withdrawing your sweet condescension in time. For, darling, whether you are mine or become another's, I shall love you my whole life long."

"Ah, my Precious! my new-found bliss! no fear of me. My only deliberation for weeks past has been how I could obtain you. Brave and daring as we all know you to be — for you have grappled with perils which appall us to think of — there was a measure and quality of courage required in this case which you fail to possess, and which I have nightly prayed God to instill into your heart. O my darling Lawrence, you know not how your little Lucia has been agonized when contemplating the possibility of losing you. It was so terrible to think of going back to England with my own proud heart burthened with an unacknowledged, if not an unrequited, love." And Lucia's eyes beamed with impatience, as with questioning gaze she awaited her lover's defense.

"Dearest, God, the father and the friend, has been most watchful and gracious to us both, and we should strive never to forget his goodness in snatching us from such a blighting. Daily, through my whole life, will I

thank him for this day's remembrance — lifting me into the hallowed light of thy loving gaze, and bending your imperious heart down to the level of my love."

The growing tenderness of Lucia's luminous eyes, and the increasing quivering of her lips, was all the response the dumb-lipped girl could bestow; but it was enough. It was such a record of heart-throbs and sacred endearments as Lawrence had never perused before, — sweeter and dearer than all the honeyed words of tongue; and this fast-linked twain now clung to each other, questioning and answering with their eyes.

Looking into his frank, outspoken face, a pure woman would discover nothing to dim the bright escutcheon of her purity. And Lucia could not but lose herself among such manly prepossessions, whether she would or no, for they were qualities to entice like magnets, and flatter like moonlight, and never would she rue the day when she trusted her heart to his keeping.

How long they clung to each other without speaking! And with what intensity they gazed, with eyes that tattled as meadow-brooks babble to the brook-side flowers. Ah, it is indeed high art in human love to acquire the full mastery of long silences, for subtle, mysterious, and profound are their whisperings and disclosures. He who thus acquires the true focus of the heart's electric rhythm, and is satisfied to wait to win, will not go long unloved. Lady Lucia was the first to break the silence, so tumultuous and sweet.

"O Lawrence, my king of men! How happy you have made one little heart to-night! Suffer me to cling tighter and tighter, that I may assure myself this joy is

real, for it seems so like a sweet enchanting dream which may not abide our keeping. It came so like a God-gift, descending upon me from out the rifted sky, that I am apprehensive lest it depart from me as it came. Dear love, listen how wildly our hearts are beating — joy-filled near akin to pain. Tell me, what are they saying?"

"Ah, Lucia, they are a babbling pair, disclosing sweet secrets never whispered to the world before. These wild undulations are the great tidal waves of love, emotions made up of divine elements; living upon what they receive, and bestowing life by what they impart, thus transmitting and receiving to the end."

"Dear Lawrence, how near we came to parting, never to meet again. But for this one propitious hour, these billowy heart-throbs would have been our only reminder that we had met, loved, and parted to meet no more. Dearest, where was your vaunted courage that you could so risk our happiness? Why should you so hesitate to scale the flimsy battlement of rank that hedged me in?"

"I know not, dear girl. But when I came to know you, your dazzling beauty and winsome ways inspired me with such reverence, and placed you so high above me and my sphere in life, that my courage daily diminished, as the waning moon becomes timid and retiring at the greater brilliance of the sun. An hour since, my last love-hope went down into rayless darkness — like a stormed-lashed ship that bottoms in the sea. You came to me in the evening so resplendent and sweet and grand that I dared not touch your garment's hem. I stood awed

and abashed at the brilliance of your presence, and at length fled from before you, as from the blinding effulgence of an angel."

"Lawrence, Lawrence! you humble and abase me, as by the presence of a god. Believe me, love, I never sought to win a human soul before. For you I culled my best array, and decked myself in splendor. I played my best on lute and harp and all; sang as I ne'er could sing before, and witnessed your loving heart respond with gladness in your eyes. But, alas! alas! like the white sheen of a far-receding sail dipping down, down over the blue horizon's rim, so one by one my hopes of your love went down, until I beheld the only man I ever loved repelled by my every blandishment. O Lawrence! why was this so?" And Lucia fell on her lover's breast, sobbing with undefined emotions.

"Listen, dear Lucia, and I will reflect my very soul, as in a mirror, to your view. I loved you from the moment of our meeting. Wounded and weak as I was when first we met, my proud heart grew audacious, and in the loneliness of my chamber I permitted it to sail boldly in consort with your own. But when I got about, and met you often, the gracious efforts you made to please me portrayed a being so exalted that my aspirations became wingless, until I quailed to follow where you led. Despair beset me often; but not until to-night did hope's gay banners come sadly fluttering down from truck and peak, and but for your dear helping hand we never should have met again."

With her glad face turned to his, Lucia smiled in answer, and drew her lover's cheek down to her own,

that its hot flushes might make reply to his inmost soul. This proud scion of an almost royal house — to whom many a British peer had sued in vain — lay heart to heart with her sailor lover, both made too full for utterance by this double assurance of each other's love.

How long they clung thus to each other they knew not. The chiming of the small night hours on the neighboring tower broke the spell of their love dream —which comes never again with such charm. Only in the hour of his betrothal is Love revealed at his best, full-plumed and radiant with new-born glories — like the fresh perfumes of first blossoms on the rarest flowers.

The westing moon passed behind the foliage and left the lovers in darkness. Lawrence changed his position so that Lucia's head could be removed from the shadow of the plane-tree. Lifting her face of classic beauty upon his arm, until it became flooded with moonbeams, he watched his own image reflected in the violet eyes of his darling. With loving response, Lucia gazed up into the manly face bending over her, and together they drank their fill, till every feature of their faces was delineated with precision — etched so keenly upon memory as never to be forgotten.

Ah, what a delicious problem for the wise ones to ponder are the greetings of enamored eyes and the vermil lips of lovers. Who can cull their glowing thoughts from the molten emotions of such an hour? Two innocents propounding sentimental questions beyond the mission of mere words to answer; whose ardent lips confirm or confute every flattering affirmation of the tongue, by the force and fondness of their kissing; whose tell-tale

eyes gladly enter the confessional, lifting the hymeneal veil from the inmost recesses of the heart, baring a maiden's holiest shrines and disclosing her most sacred emotions — raptures not meet for the eye of man.

At length Lawrence was aroused by the lateness of the hour. "Ought we not to return to the drawing-room, my Lucia? I rob the company of its bright presiding star."

"Nay, not yet, not yet! With the moon upon my face, you have perused my soul with its open pages lying before you like a printed record. Was it such a fulsome task that you would debar your little Lucia a like inspection of the treasures which you bring?"

"No, darling girl, nothing would please me better than to have you take an inventory of the inmost vellum of my soul. But you must remember, dearest, that the masculine parchment you seek to explore is crinkled and corrugated with the lava-floods inherent to a life of tussle and toil."

"Come, bare your face to the moon, and let me see. I do not look to find the effeminate softness of a woman there. I would search for the rugged cliffs and crags of emotion. The noble landmarks of great thoughts that burn like molten iron, and the battle-scarred record of great deeds which fill the world with fame."

"Dear one, what shall I do to please you?"

"Come, sit you here, while I turn the face of my sailor-boy to the lighted windows of the sky. One moment let me search your manly heart, and ponder over the hoarded gifts you tender with your love. I would question whence comes this power to win a proud

maiden, while you were yet unknown. And learn the mystery which robs me of my heart, and absorbs my very being, as perfume blends with dew."

"How is that, fair lady?" Lawrence asked, as he assumed the required position, and lay with smiling face beneath the welcome lunar beam.

"That will do. And now lie quiet, dearest Lawrence, tongueless as a mute. I will tell you of my precious mother, sometime, she who was so beautiful and so good. I wish that her sainted face might now appear to you in some star-gemmed rift in the sky, as it often beams upon me. Oh, that she would lean forth from the corridors of heaven and breathe her blessing on your brow, and witness the transport of her child. Dear mother! come forth from among the angels, and bless the new-found lover whom I bring. Make us two one, in thy dear sight; and supplicate the Father to imprint the seal of heaven on his brow."

With face beaming with joy, the entranced creature bent over her lover, studying his bronzed face as it lay smiling beneath her gaze. It was for no idle purpose that she sought to limn his handsome lineaments upon her mind, and imprint his loving expressions upon some virgin page of memory; but with the solemn intent of one parting with a dead love at the grave-side, for the coming morning would sunder them for many months, perhaps forever.

After brimming her soul with pleasant acquisitions of her lover, the young girl turned her face God-ward, and seemed in earnest prayer. Shaking the brown ringlets from her cheeks, her lips parted with evident expec-

tation of a spirit-kiss from the sainted mother. Lawrence forbore to intrude upon Lucia's devotions until her spiritual communion was ended, as announced by a sigh of relief, when he broke upon her revery, —

"Lucia, my own dear girl, it is later than you think. We must return to the drawing-room before the guests come in search of us. Dearest, we are now linked for time and eternity. There are no more questions to ask, no answers to give, for it seems certain that we have loved each other in spirit for a thousand years!"

"O Lawrence! let me put a fitting seal upon that happy sentiment." When her lips had completed the task, Lawrence continued, —

"You can have no doubt of the trusting, truthful love I bear you; nor can I question the pure, sweet affection of my darling. Soon as I can settle my commercial business in America, I will follow you to England, and seek you at Moorland Castle. Circumstances involving the interest of others may now sunder us for a while, but when we next meet nothing shall ever separate us again."

He dwelt upon the exquisite face lying upon his arm, awaiting reply. But the glib tongue of the prattling girl had lost its cunning. Lucia only smiled back a dumb answer, and permitted her warm lips to usurp their way, heedless of the visible impatience of her lover, who feared to be intruded upon by the swarm of spies from within.

How had this pure and spiritual girl acquired the delicious key-note of loving? Mute with ecstasy, her lips lingered long upon her lover's, as a bee delves among

flowers. Close-veiled by their long dark lashes, and the rose-leaf lids, Lucia hid her tell-tale lusters from Lawrence's perusal, heedless of all else but the present joy of loving.

At length they rose to go. Lucia took from her finger a rare and costly gem, and, measuring, found it would fit the smallest finger of her beloved. She exchanged with Lawrence for his only ornament of the kind, a blood-stone signet, bearing his initials on the seal, with his name engraved within.

Lucia's ring was a garnet, encircled with a brilliant aigrette of diamonds, denoting "Innocence crowned with Fidelity." Touching a spring, the garnet lifted from its setting, and disclosed a tiny likeness of what seemed Lucia herself, with the word "Lucia" lettered with diamonds beneath. It was a picture of the Countess, her mother, taken at an age somewhat exceeding the daughter's present years. Lawrence was delighted to possess such an exquisite resemblance of his darling, and expressed his gratification as lovers are wont to do.

"This ring, dear Lawrence, is the rarest gift I possess in the world. I bestow it upon you — though it contains the dearest of my dear ones — as my resemblance to this picture of my mother is said to be good. It is a better picture than any I possess of myself, so you ought to take some comfort with the gift. Mother has been my guardian angel since the hour she left us. May she extend her watchful care to my new-found love. With this gift I embark my two greatest treasures together, and may God restore you both to me in safety."

"A thousand thanks, dear Lucia, for the precious memento. I shall prize it above all I possess."

This task accomplished, Lucia took Lawrence's arm ready to return, the proudest and happiest of maidens. As they neared the entrance to the drawing-room, and were about to encounter the hundred curious eyes within, as by one delicious impulse, they slowed their steps, and whispered their farewell messages in one low chanson of love to each other. Touching their lips, — the latest and the last, — they sobered the fond expression on their faces into one of serenity, sufficient to meet the scrutiny of whosoever would question the sweetness of their dalliance; as the wooing lily covets the attention of its beloved Horus throughout the day, but folds its petals at the approach of darkness, and shuts in its pure splendor from the countless eyes of night.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE PATERNAL BLESSING.

LONG ere the lovers appeared, many were the furtive, impatient glances cast toward the balcony by the annoyed people who still lingered in the stifled air of the drawing-room. The Earl of St. Clare and Admiral Seymour were seen gravely walking together, purposely keeping aloof from the eager, anxious groups seen scattered about the assembly. The faces of many of the guests showed a fierce determination to outwait and outwit the tardy lovers by staying until the final *dénouement* transpired.

The two white-headed noblemen stood guard manfully to the last, politely turning back many an impertinent intruder bent upon solving the mystery of Cupid without. Among those most fretted by the novel affair were numerous naval officers who had come in from the balcony to renew their cigars, or report progress to friends within, intent upon returning to again spy upon the lovers.

These pertinacious heroes were bluffly confronted by the Admiral, and ordered to "Tack about, gentlemen! Go in stays lively, and endeavor to make a port elsewhere for the present." Coming from such a source, the order was mandatory, and required instant obedience.

Not so when Governor Dinsmore undertook to solve

the problem, urged on by the imperious mandate of his wife. Officials of such ilk fell to the more facile diplomacy of the noble Earl. Advancing to meet his Excellency, St. Clare kindly took his arm, and while the pair walked back and forth indulging in a laugh about thoughtless young lovers, the Earl jocosely quoted some similar reminiscences of his own youth. A plan which sent Sir John blandly back to his fretful Angelina, to battle the watch as best he could.

At length these aristocratic guards became impatient and annoyed at the awkwardness of the situation. It was long past the time for breaking up. But, as yet, not a person of importance would take the initiative step in going before their popular young hostess was present for leave-taking. This latter predicament was brought about by numerous dominant-minded females of the coterie, who reported having heard his Excellency casually remark to his amiable spouse, —

"Well, my dear, I've had enough of this, waiting for two persons who have likely lost their heads, as well as their hearts. Let us go and pay our respects to the Earl, and be gone."

"No, no, Dinsmore, I will not stir a step. I wish to witness the effect a love affair has upon the lovely complexion of Lucia Seymour."

"Confound the girl's complexion. It's rude to keep the company dallying here on her account."

"Tut, tut! Why, Sir John, have you forgotten how you would have kept me up half the night in the arbor at Ravenwood, had I not been a modest girl, and denied you such favors?"

"Modesty be hanged! Why, my love, you would always stick like a tick, never willing to let me depart."

"Fie, fie, sir! Please be more circumspect in your disclosures, in such a gossiping gathering as this. Now, dear Johnny, can't you wait patiently, and see the delicious effect of more pink distributed to the lips and cheeks of our dear little Lucia?"

"Beg pardon, my lady, a gentleman can't be expected to keep up an interest in such flummery all night."

"Oh, ho, Sir John, lies the wind there? Then, sir, you had better trot along home, and don your night-cap, puff away at your nasty old pipe, and sip at your mug of Burton ale — intellectual occupation for a great-minded man. How is it that you have forgotten your own extreme silliness, when you once came bantering around your 'dear Angelina,' only a score and a half years since? Trot along down to the boat, and depart for Kow-Loon, if you must. But I'll stay here till morning, rather than miss the end on't, sir, that's what I will!"

Only those fortunate enough to catch a glimpse of the happy pair, as they reluctantly approached the door, gleaned aught to gossip about. Those discovered with what intense fervor two plastic hearts had been blended during the past hour, and, having seen the solemnity and sadness of the parting, were in no riant mood to tattle about the matter.

When the lovers entered the room, the Earl and the Admiral pressed eagerly forward to meet them. Without a word or look of chiding at her long delay, the Earl of St. Clare took his blushing daughter upon his arm

and led her silently away to the outlet door, near the broad stair; a sufficient hint to their yawning guests that the host and hostess were ready to receive the parting salutations of all.

While the Earl was escorting his daughter to the opposite end of the room, Sir Michael hastily grappled to Captain Lawrence, and pleasantly chided him for his rudeness to the assembled guests, saying, —

"Why, sir, by the Lord Harry, I have nearly boiled over for an hour back. And a pretty mess I should have made of it, with all this surplus blubber, — as you whalers would call it, — and the tons of beer and wine that I've tucked into my bread-locker to-night."

"What's up, Admiral? What's happened to disturb you?"

"What terrible catastrophe has detained you, sir? To think of its taking all this time to teach a lassie that you're a better hand at kissing than her old uncle, whose experience in bussing is a hundred to your one, sir."

"Really, Admiral, I had hoped the company would have taken their leave long ago. For you must know that it's not very pleasant to run such a gantlet of curious eyes, after a delicate affair like ours."

"Well, my lad, tell us all about it in a twinkling. Speak up, my blushing friend, did you misstay in tacking, that it took you so long to carry such a juvenile craft by the board? Bless me, sir, every lad has been saying to his lassie, 'It's a tough job that the brave Captain has undertaken, wooing that kittenish beauty.' — 'She fights shy,' says another, 'and the Yankee can't win a fair lady as easily as he can slash a pirate.' Now

tell us at once, you rogue, are you vanquished or victorious ?"

And the jolly old sailor stopped short in his walk, dropped the arm of his young friend, and eagerly looked the question he had asked, anxious and impatient as a mother over the luck of her first-born.

"She's mine, my good Admiral! I have fought the great fight, and won. And above all others must I thank you for the prize I have obtained. You have been kind as a parent to me, and I shall love you my whole life long."

"Bravo! Then we are to keep you in the family in spite of all. Tell me, my boy, was it a combat at long shots, or a hard tussle yard-arm to yard-arm ? A close fight, where the splinters fly, and the top-hamper tumbles gloriously about your ears ?"

"Well, Admiral, perhaps you might term it a yard-arm affair. At least the battle was fought at close quarters."

"Ah, yes, I understand. It was a case of boarding in the heat of action, where one loses his own identity, and can't just tell whether he's barque-rigged, or a Dutch galliot. But how does the lassie sail in consort ? Does she fight shy, or answer to the helm gingerly ?"

"Here comes Lady Lucia to speak for herself. The guests seem to have all departed, leaving us alone to ourselves."

The Earl came frankly forward, graciously taking Captain Lawrence by the hand, his countenance beaming with gratification, as he exclaimed, with a courtly smile,—

"Most noble Captain! this young lady — once my obedient daughter — has the assurance to tell me that she has given herself away, without waiting my permission; that you are betrothed, and she now demands my sanction at the point of the bayonet."

"Yes, your Lordship. I can attest the truth of her information. Has she then acquitted herself so unseemly in your estimation, that we two impenitent ones cannot jointly prevail upon so gracious a parent to forgive what is irrevocably done?"

"I suppose that I shall be induced to give my consent in time."

"May we not claim your parental blessing now, in the moment of our exceeding joy?"

"Yes, you brave man; you have deserved it, and shall receive it."

While Lawrence was yet speaking to her father, the blushing Lucia stole to the side of her lover and put her hand in his; and together they knelt before the white-haired old nobleman to receive his blessing. With a trembling hand upon the head of each, the gratified parent uttered tender and eloquent words for the welfare of his darling child and her well-chosen mate, amidst tears of joy from every eye in the little group.

When Lawrence rose to his feet, the noble Earl clasped him in his arms, — man to man, and noble heart to heart, — earnestly declaring that he received him with all honor, and love, and pride. For this gracious acceptance, Lucia sprang forward and embraced her father, sobbing on his breast with unpent emotion. Then, running to her uncle, the overjoyed girl kissed

him upon his weather-worn cheeks, exclaiming in the delight of her heart, —

"You dear old Sailor-boy! You deserve to be smothered in roses and kisses, and all the good things of life, for keeping guard so beautifully. I'll speak to the queen about it, and you shall be promoted to the Admiralty for such gallant service in the hour of need. You see if I don't!"

"Ha, ha! by Jove! it was the most vexatious duty that I ever performed. Why, lassie, I began to think my young friend had found more than his match, and I was wofully tempted to bear down upon the scene of action, and pour in a broadside myself."

"But, dear uncle, which side should you have fired upon? Not upon my frail craft, I hope."

"Which side, ha? Why, girl, the antagonist who resisted most should have received every shot from my lower tier of biggest guns. And, after all that long hour's waiting, it's evident that some one fought shy longer than the laws o' love permit. So you, likely, escaped witnessing a dreadful slaughter."

"O you cruel warrior, to thirst for the blood of the innocents in that manner. Now, uncle, if two more of my best kisses will settle the matter, I'll diplomatize upon the spot, and we'll have the treaty of amity ratified by the great powers, along with Governor Lin's new treaty of commerce."

"Well, my pink o' posies, it's agreed. But mind, Lucia, I'll receive all the loot falling to me right here, on the bluff of the bows, for my old cheeks are so weather-bleached that I might otherwise be defrauded."

And the Admiral put out his lips to receive the precious guerdon he had so deservedly won.

During this while, St. Clare and Lawrence were discussing plans for the future. The old noble was explaining that his daughter had a vast income in her own right, left by the Countess, so there must be no more thought of the sea. Lawrence was requested to hasten to England, and make his home with them at Moorland Castle.

At this moment, while Lucia was bestowing her merry kisses upon her uncle, she chanced to look over his shoulder and discovered a masked face peering in at the balcony window, showing fiercely gleaming eyes that made her cry out in a smothered voice of fear. There was also a glitter of steel, as from a pistol barrel, that seemed to be pointed at some of the group as with evil intent.

Gathering all this at a glance, with a low exclamation of alarm, the terrified girl disclosed what she saw to her uncle. The Admiral wheeled with what expedition a clumsy man is capable of, but the masked face was gone, disappearing instantly at Lucia's outcry.

Without waiting for further explanation, Sir Michael drew his rapier and hastened with an expeditious waddle to the balcony, accompanied by Lucia, and followed by the other two, seeking an explanation of the affair. The moon had dropped low into the west, and all lay in so deep shadow without that not a sign of anybody could be found.

After a thorough search by the energetic old Admiral, who lunged his weapon into every cluster of shrubs, and

under the bottom of every lounging-chair, he concluded that Lady Lucia was deluded, and had not seen a thing. But the girl was equally sure that she had seen a masked face and a pistol barrel. This induced the Earl and the Captain to research every nook and corner of the gallery.

At the end of their search, Lucia found none to credit her story. His Lordship deemed it impossible for a person to escape from the balcony, it hung so sheer out over the sea. But, upon further inspection, a limb of the great plane tree was found to extend far out over the cliff-edge, reaching to within a few feet of the western aperture which overlooked the high-walled garden.

Captain Lawrence suggested that a cool-headed person, capable of a springy leap, might possibly vault over the space separating the limb from the balcony. But the other gentlemen demurred at this, strenuously urging that while a sure-footed athlete might possibly accomplish the feat by daylight, no one could be sufficiently foolhardy to attempt it in the dark, when to fall would be a headlong tumble two hundred and fifty feet into the sea. So the subject was dropped, the three gentlemen being in doubt of any one having been seen.

The party passed into the library at the east end of the house, and, after further talk about future plans, Lawrence prepared to separate from his friends, as morning was fast approaching. A hearty farewell from the two noblemen, and a dozen swift, delicious kisses from Lady Lucia, given in defiance of the storm of raillery from the Admiral, who declared that he would lay a sealed embargo upon a pair of red lips that ran riot so indiscreetly.

"As if a dozen such stunning kisses as those, squandered upon one chap, was not a thing unheard of in nautical lore."

Leaving his new-found friends at the head of the broad stair, Lawrence found his way down to the street door, where the porter was seen asleep in the vestibule. A single sentry was tramping back and forth on his weary guard just within the stone gate which gave outlet through the garden wall.

On the street without stood the sedan waiting for the last lingering guest, the two stout coolies lying asleep between the shafts of their dainty vehicle. The chair belonged to Mrs. Drinker, and had been kindly sent for the Captain's use more than three hours before.

Awakening the Chinamen, Lawrence seated himself in the sedan, and was soon speeding on his homeward way. The two stout carriers trotted off with their burden at a rate that would soon take the Captain to the hospitable Drinker house. Until he arrived there, Lawrence had nothing better to think of than the royal accession of fortune just added to his previous good luck. He naturally dropped into a pleasing revery about his charming Lucia and her bewitching affection for him. Brooding over the bewildering joys of the long evening, well might his mind become filled with wonder while contemplating the stupendous change which had revolutionized all his future prospects in life.

CHAPTER XV.

THE TRAGIC INTERVIEW.

SCARCELY had the Ambassador's brilliant assemblage dispersed to their respective abodes — the Governor and party seeking their homes at Kow-Loon, escorted to the landing by the Lascar sentinel at the gate, while the naval officers went down the cliff stair to their boats, — ere a low, peculiar whistle made the night air vibrant with its impulsive call.

Before the echo of this silver call had ceased to throb on the startled ear, a richly dressed boy sprang out from a commodious porch opposite the embassy, and ran across the street to the Ladrone Palace, in answer to the signal. Though the youth was appareled in the guise of a young mandarin, his rich Chinese attire did not deter one from thinking that he looked more like a Spanish girl, judging by his effeminate face; while his extravagant length of pigtail was much too abundant and silky to be what it represented. Moreover, the disguise was made more apparent from the youth's large pelvis and strong, tapering limbs, to say nothing of his unusual bust and diminutive hands.

Such as he was, the sprightly messenger seemed to have been on the watch for the preconcerted signal, and came bounding toward the garden gate of the embassy at the first note of the whistle; though other ears would

have found it difficult to determine whence came the reverberating sound, which diffused through the glimmering night air like the whir of a swallow's wings.

Standing in the massive arch of the gateway, hidden from observing eyes by the deep gloom of the place, there appeared the dim outline of a woman, clothed in a dark toga, and wearing a Spanish sombrero jauntily decked with long drooping feathers.

Handing a note to the messenger, as he approached on the run, the lady — for her proud bearing indicated no common personage —whispered a low spoken message to the youth, speaking in the rich Hidalgo tongue of old Spain. She then sought a hiding-place among the shrubbery near the entrance to the embassy; while the nimble boy ran back across the street to his porch, evidently intending to wait some coming event before further procedure. The boy and his mistress had barely time to escape detection by the returning guard, who again took up his lonely tramp near the palace gate.

Captain Lawrence soon after made his appearance, and, as we have previously seen, aroused his carriers, who were slumbering near their vehicle. Not a moment elapsed after Lawrence entered his sedan, and the coolies disappeared down Queen Street, before the message-boy again appeared from the opposite porch. Having saluted the guard and given him the correct pass-word, the boy passed up the graveled walk and rang the bell at the palace door. When the summons was answered by a coolie servant, the boy delivered his note, requesting an immediate answer, for which he proposed to wait.

The youth was ushered into the vestibule, where he disappeared for the time.

Soon after Lawrence left the house, Lady Lucia retired to her chamber, tearful and sad at separating from her betrothed. Bidding Irene remain in the anteroom until she was summoned, Lucia sought to hold brief communion with herself, and indulge in her accustomed solace of prayer.

Hastily divesting herself of the more cumbersome parts of her dress, she robed herself in a loose negligee in which to pass the morning hours. Standing before her mirror, she loosed the bands and braids of her hair, and flung the cascade of soft brown tresses free and flowing about her slight figure, till the silken masses infolded her to the waist. After the gas was dimmed down, Lucia found that she was not quite alone, for the moon's amber beams came spying in through a western window, high above the garden wall, hastening, unasked, to caress with her yellow finger-tips the girl's white neck and satined feet with the ardor of a lover.

When fairly attired and secure from intrusion, Lucia dropped upon her knees beside the couch, appearing in the shimmering night-beam like a rift of snow fresh-fallen from a cloud. Making a strong effort to subdue her agitation — for her soul was still enhungered and athirst for her lost lover — she bowed her head upon the snowy coverlid and thanked the Heavenly Father for his divine guidance of the day and the happy sequel of her love.

After a restful, satisfying prayer, Lucia sank upon her downy couch for a quiet revery and brief repose; most

grateful for the auspicious events vouchsafed to her. Hardly had she composed herself for the night, and called up a convocation of sweet memories about her palpitant couch, till the dimly lighted chamber was filled with mystic embodiments of love, before she was disturbed by some one knocking for admission.

Irene was heard at the door asking permission to enter, having something of importance for her mistress. When the maid entered the room, she delivered the note brought by the message-boy, whom she had endeavored to delay until morning, not wishing to disturb Lady Lucia; who now called the girl to her, and asked, —

"What have you here, Irene, coming at such an untimely hour?"

"A note, my Lady, which calls for an immediate answer. It was brought by a nice little Chinese boy. Will your Ladyship look into it, or shall I bid the lad begone?"

Annoyed by the occurrence, Lady Seymour contemplated sending the courier away. Upon second thought, she feared lest the message might come from Lawrence. This induced her to hastily slip the ribbon of gold from the dainty billet, and, soon as a gas could be turned on, she eagerly perused the strange missive, found written in a neat, clear hand, and addressed as follows:

"BEAUTIFUL LADY, — Though your heart is now beating for your new-found love, and you are seeking the needed repose before sailing with the morning tide for your English home, alas! I have that to disclose which would wreck your future happiness not to know. Please dismiss your servants and admit me at once, for the sake of the dear one whom you love better than all else.

ALOATA OSMANTI."

Lucia was amazed and startled at the contents, as well as the imperative demand for an interview at such an hour. After a minute's reflection, she questioned Irene, and, having learned that the Admiral and her father were still in the library, she bade the maid admit the strange lady for a brief interview, adding, —

"Now go and show in Lady Osmanti. And see that you keep within bell-call, and do not permit any one to disturb us until I ring."

"Yes, my Lady," the sleepy girl replied, as she departed on her mission. Seeking the youth, Irene found him still waiting in the vestibule, and gave him the desired permission.

Thanking the maid in a courtly manner, not much in keeping with the servile character he had assumed, the lad thrust his head out of the door, and blew a low bird-call on a silver whistle; made to quiver with an artful tremolo by a cunning touch of the tongue. The call was instantly answered by what seemed the faintest possible echo, coming from no one could tell where.

The startled guard ceased his stolid tramping, and watched to see the result of this mystery. As nothing occurred visible to his dull perception, the sentry again took up his monotonous duty. But the instant the soldier's back was turned, the mysterious woman emerged from the adjoining shrubbery and entered the vestibule. She was muffled in a long circular toga, made of some rich, dark material, fashioned like a boat-cloak. From beneath a wide-rimmed Spanish hat there peered a young resolute face, with flashing black eyes, fine features, and altogether a *tout ensemble* of remarkable beauty.

The lady was evidently of Spanish ancestry, descended from some grand old Hidalgo family. The instant she stepped into the hall and stood in the presence of Irene, she assumed an arrogant air, and flashed her imperious glances over everything within the scope of her vision. She spoke a word in Chinese to the boy, who replied in the same guttural tongue, and departed on some new mission. Turning to Irene with a lofty nod, she asked, —

"What word from Lady Seymour?" and she fixed the girl with a glance as if to warn her against any unacceptable message.

"My Lady consents to receive Lady Osmanti for a brief interview."

Pleased to receive this long-delayed assent, a gracious smile beamed on the face of the stranger, and she displayed her teeth of such brilliant whiteness that they were in fine contrast to the rose-tinge of her olive complexion.

"Lead on, and I will follow," she said, wafting the maid on up the broad stair with her bejeweled hand. As they approached the upper hall, Lady Osmanti took the hand of the awe-stricken maid, and slipped a newly minted doubloon into her palm, familiarly saying, —

"A more lovely mistress and prettier maid were never seen in Chung Kwoh," which signifies Middle Kingdom among the Celestials.

When the two came to the chamber, Irene tapped gently on the door, and, having received permission to enter, ushered in the mysterious stranger, glad to be rid of a person who inspired her with such superstitious

fear. Lady Lucia was standing before her mirror, weaving her fingers through the unbound tangle of her tresses, endeavoring to free her face from the flying locks. When she turned to greet the dark-hued stranger, she was startled by what seemed a half-recognition of the distinguished face before her, as if the countenance was not wholly new to her.

Lady Osmanti advanced, and proffered her shapely brown hand to Lucia, like one who greets her equal, saying in a deep contralto voice of winning sweetness, —

"This is a privilege that Lady Seymour will not regret. Will the Senorita please order that we be left to ourselves?" glancing arrogantly back to Irene, who lingered just within the door.

Lucia nodded to the maid to retire, repeating her previous order that she should keep within bell-call, as she might wish to send to the Admiral or the Earl. Turning to the visitor, Lady Seymour requested her to be seated, and pointed out the seat. Both ladies dropped into richly-cushioned lounging-chairs, facing each other.

It was a meeting of two antipodal souls. Two women who exhibited the greatest extremes of shadow and sunshine to be found in their sex, and no wonder that both ladies were captivated by the strange contrast of beauty seen in the other.

The refined profile of the one, as seen shadowed against the chamber-wall, was purely Grecian, chaste and charming. The larger silhouette of the other confronting it was like an antique specimen of the glyptic art derived from the Alhambra, typical of the ancient

Spanish Moors who were so tender in love and unrelenting in hate.

Aloata was a large, commanding, imperious woman, graceful and grand as a Century plant. A rose-tinted brunette with masses of black, wavy hair; large, flashing black eyes, deep set, and mysterious as midnight. Her keen, searching glances pierced the soul of her companion as though she were confronted by an eerie.

The Seymour and the Osmanti were alike by nature two proud imperious spirits, though one had been reared to conform gracefully to all the courtly requirements of her rank, and could rarely be stirred to display the volcanic fires within. While it was only by the exertion of a superhuman will-power — not always at command — that the other could constrain herself, as now, to become gentle and playful as a leopardess in its native jungle.

Whoso looked into Aloata's deep, dark eyes — even now when at their gentlest — would be convinced that but a moment of passion would suffice to arouse all the unscrupulous elements of her nature. She was a woman formed to strangle a tiger or pet a kitten, which leads us to question which *rôle* she had set herself to accomplish in this interview with Lady Lucia.

Such as they were, there is but one dominant sentiment in life which may induce these antiscian souls to become more kindred than we find them, — the emotion of a deep, absorbing love. Such an alchemist could not only subdue the most turbulent spirit, but might possibly awaken those gentle amenities of lovers, humility and self-sacrifice, inherent in every noble woman.

After seating herself near Lady Lucia, as requested, and indulging in a moment's calm, scrutinous study of the fair face before her, Lady Osmanti opened the conversation, —

"Lady Seymour, you are even more graceful and beautiful than the gossiping people of Kow-Loon and Victoria have conceded. Too good, too charming to be sacrificed as the relentless fates have decided. You are courageous, and may perhaps redeem all; but you must act promptly, and with resolution. You were born under the ringed influence of Saturn, as you know. A baleful star that has brought many of your great House of St. Clare to the block, and which gleams brighter to-night than the newly acquired hoop of gold that encircles your finger."

Roused to the utmost by such a startling announcement, delivered with the oracular look and tone of a sibyl, well might the brave English maiden catch her breath with wonder and dismay, questioning how this mysterious visitor came in possession of secrets known only to herself and her lover. Looking fixedly into the fathomless eyes of this prophetic being, Lady Lucia exclaimed in superstitious fear, —

"Lady Osmanti, who and what are you, thus confuting the Fates, and revealing family secrets which only one other should possess?"

"Lady, I am one gifted with supernatural power to read the past, intercept the present, and reveal the yet unborn future. One who can stay the ruthless hands of the Fates when they fail to temper justice with mercy. This should suffice for you, and, knowing this,

you should be willing to trust me with your future guidance."

"Nay, madam, you speak with an arrogance that repels, and an irreverence which makes me recoil from you. God is our guide through life, even into the valley of death. He only can change the present, modify the hereafter, and mold the destinies of mankind. I acknowledge no power of the Fates. Woman, what would you ask of me? Speak quickly, for this interview must terminate at once."

"I came to warn you against the unbeaten track you have launched upon. You have just chosen the precipitous path to misery. I bid you beware! Turn from this dread peril ere it is too late."

"Woman, I conjure you, tell me what you mean. You curdle my blood by these vile insinuations."

"Proud, deluded creature, destruction confronts you, as deadly as the wrath of a typhoon."

"Speak more to the purpose, and that quickly!" And the half-frenzied girl seized upon Aloata's arm with the fierce clutch of an eagle. "Tell me, this instant! Is not Charles Lawrence all that he seems? Is he not good and pure and noble? Nay, is he not worthy of the noblest woman living?"

"Yes, my lady, he is all that you have conceived, and more. Listen, and I will show you the peril that I came to disclose." She rose and stood in the low-seated window leading to the balcony, and pointed ominously to the sky. "Will you please wheel your chair to the window? or, better still, step out upon the gallery with me, and behold the fell star of your nativity."

And the arrogant woman stood there queenly and statuesque as a Juno, pointing like a fateful Sorceress to the star, her darkening countenance becoming vengeful as the Nemesis when tempted to crush the world. Lady Seymour wheeled her chair to the broad open window as requested, and turned her face to the sky, now dimly seen by the lingering light of the setting moon.

"This position will do," she said. "I can see Saturn from where I sit. It seems about to blend its light with a more brilliant planet."

"Yes, Saturn and Jupiter are about to conjoin, even while we speak. The nativities of you two mortals — born in remote hemispheres — must not be permitted to blend before you revoke your troth-plight, else wreck and untold misery await you both. Choose between such a fate, and the pomp and glory of regal honors which await you in England, where one near the throne of the motherly Guelph seeks to make you his Princess."

Again Lady Seymour's blue eyes grew brighter and bluer with astonishment, to learn that her private offer of marriage from the dissolute prince, while in India, was thus found in the keeping of this stranger.

"Lady Osmanti, what can you know of that which awaits me? What know you of him to whom I am plighted as irrevocably as the earth to its orbit? You cold, imperious creature! to stand there dictating me with the prophetic authority of a bearded seer. Are the occult plans of the Omnipotent open to your view? Are you omniscient that you reveal this royal marriage awaiting my option?"

Lady Lucia sprang up and confronted Aloata, awed and angered; but with her interest aroused to the utmost by the majestic look and tone of the fascinating woman.

"Yes, you proud Saxon beauty, I am all that and more; for I have the power to award life or death to you at this moment. Thus, beware! Be compliant, if you wish the Osmanti to divert the direst of evils from you and yours, and confer a lasting happiness upon you; as truly as the perfumed flower leads the hoiden bee to seek the rarest blossoms."

"And what would you have me do to accomplish such happiness, thou demoness of evil?"

"Break from the flimsy thrall which links you to a love so much beneath you. And you must decide quickly, before yonder conjunction of the dread planets is completed. Make choice between a plebeian lover — though manly and handsome as an Adonis — and that grandest of all honors that earth can bestow, marital proximity to a throne."

"Woman, what proof have you of all these flattering predictions?"

"A knowledge transmitted to the seers of my ancestry through twenty centuries. The complete conjunction of two such baleful horoscopes as yours and his has never yet failed to bring about the ruin of both participants. Yonder fell orbs will complete their conjugation in less than three minutes, which seals your doom, if you have not previously revoked your childish preference for a rustic lover."

Aloata caught one of the clinched hands of the

roused maiden in her strong grasp, still pointing with a gesture of terrible significance to the meeting nativities. Lady Lucia did not quail for an instant before her fierce inquisitor, while she replied: —

"Hear me, you troth-breaking sorceress! Grand and beautiful though you are, you are mad. You are certainly crazed to thus tamper with my holy affection for another. Never could your scornful heart have been touched by love worthy of the name, else you would not approach a Seymour on such a futile errand.

"Listen, you benighted woman, and I will give you a text for loving such as never dawned upon your conception. Go, group together all the honors of the world: crown them with the jeweled emblem of the proudest throne in Christendom, and Lucia Seymour would spurn them, and you with your gifts of fate. You need not be told that I have won me a most befitting love, capable of imparting more permanent joy to a woman's heart than all else in life. Learn from this that a descendant of the great House of St. Clare may pine unwedded and unloved, but never will she revoke her plighted troth when given to a worthy man. Now go, go from me; for your presence has become most distasteful." And she suddenly withdrew her hand from Aloata's grasp, and stood defiantly before her.

"Too late, too late, poor deluded girl!" exclaimed Aloata, in a tone of regret and anger, as she still pointed to the fast blending stars. "It chills my blood to behold the awful fate which awaits you now. There stands before my vision a dreadful shipwreck. The storm-lashed sea and the cruel breakers are thick strewn

with the dead. I hear the crash of the mad waters about your shattered vessel, and the shrieks of your drowning companions assail my ear, as they reach up their hands in vain endeavor through the ingulfing waters. And I behold the man, upon whom you doat, given up to the murderous hands of assassins. This doom is recorded in the world above. So mote it be!"

Aloata turned from the conjuncted planets to Lady Seymour with a look of terrible menace in her eyes. From that moment a demon of fiendishness seemed to possess her at Lucia's stubborn resistance. Grasping the small white wrist of the maiden with an iron grip, she forcibly wrenched Lawrence's ring from Lucia's finger, and sprang out through the window with the trophy. Walking hastily to the garden end of the balcony, she whistled the same soft notes of recall which brought forth the boy an hour before.

When Lucia realized that she had been robbed of her betrothal ring, she too sprang out of the window, ran after Aloata, seized upon her, and demanded the treasure. With the frenzy of a roused lion, Lady Osmanti caught up the slight-formed girl in her strong grasp, walked quickly to the balustrade of a central aperture with murderous intent to fling her helpless victim headlong into the sea.

"Father in heaven! receive me into thy keeping," murmured the brave girl, while thus held dangling out over the black abyss. She heard the sibilant voice of the tide swashing against the jutting rocks below; heard the clang of her own heart-beat against the palpitant darkness, as the strong grip of the maniac tightened

upon arm and waist with the sudden impulse to hurl her victim farther out into the sea.

"Forswear your love for that man, instantly, or die!" came hissing through the shut teeth of the infuriated Spaniard, as she prepared to fling the shuddering girl from her grasp.

"Never while God gives me breath will I forswear my love for Lawrence," was Lucia's brave response; uttered with a ring of scorn at the thought of her yielding that which was more to her than life. The desperate daring of the reply must have touched Aloata's admiration, for she could not loosen her grasp on the beautiful girl.

"Then live! and await the long-lingering death from which I would have snatched you; for you are indeed worthy of the man you love." Having relented, the fierce woman strode across the gallery and tossed the speechless girl back through the window into her lounging-chair. This accomplished, she ran to the end of the balcony and sprang out through the aperture with the vault of a deer, leaping over the brink of the cliff in the direction of the plane tree, apparently plunging to certain destruction.

Lucia recovered, and instantly followed the retreating Spaniard, like a bird on the wing, pleading piteously for her ring. When she saw Aloata leap out into the darkness, she involuntarily covered her face to shut out the suicidal death-leap of her tormentor.

She heard Aloata fall crashing among the branches of the plane tree, and for a minute all was still, with the silence of death. Then followed a slipping, sliding

sound, made by one descending the cliff-side by a rope. Lady Lucia leaned out of one of the northern openings and listened to hear the body strike in the water; waiting a full minute and a half of painful apprehension. Then came the low stern voice of Aloata speaking to her men in the boat beneath, saying, —

"Draw in near to the cliff. All right. Let fall your oars! Pull a lively stroke, and forereach on the tide, for a weather gauge."

The strong muffled strokes of the oars were heard as the retreating boat sped along the cliff, and then out toward the suspicious craft which the lovers had noticed during the evening. Lucia subsequently discovered a small red rocket streaming up among the morning stars. It burst with a beautiful message to some one, somewhere, consisting of blue and yellow stars, which floated away toward the Ly-Moon with the fast ebbing tide.

Who this strange personage could be that had thus intruded upon her privacy, Lady Seymour could not imagine. After much thought she came to the belief that the woman was a beautiful maniac, become jealous of Captain Lawrence's attention to her English rival. The brave girl little thought that she had been interviewed by the pirate Queen — maddened by the death of Ching Along — than whom none were more beautiful and winsome in her rational hours, or more desperate and dangerous to confront in her moments of passionate caprice.

The click of capstan-pawls was presently heard out in the darkness, soon followed by the rattle of cordage and creaking of blocks, as the massive lateen sails were

hoisted aloft, hand over hand. When the anchor was weighed, there came the rhythmic strokes of an hundred long ashen sweeps, brought into use to assist the light morning breeze and quicken the speed of the vessel; and soon the dense darkness before dawn became a blank void before the weeping girl. Then she turned her sad eyes to the natal stars, now drawn apart and newly embarked along their separate orbits for another cycle of years; unmindful of the murderous intent they had witnessed on the balcony, and heedless of the inevitable wreck and ruin which was made contingent upon their baleful conjunction.

Mindful of her usual recourse in times of grief, the overwrought girl then fell upon her knees, bowed her head against the balustrade — where her young life came so near being forfeited — and prayed the heavenly Father for divine guidance, as had been her wont from her childhood. She rose from her devotions refreshed and re-assured, having partly divested herself of the belief that the loss of her betrothal ring could have a baleful influence over her affianced love.

Passing into her chamber, Lady Seymour sought Irene, wishing to learn why she had failed to answer the bell-call, rung so vigorously when Aloata was escaping. The maid was found in the anteroom, fast asleep upon the lounge, holding fast in her hand the glittering doubloon which the Spanish lady had given her.

The room seemed permeated with a dense, delicious perfume, which was afterwards found to have emanated from the gold coin. The doubloon had been split open on its edges, excavated, and filled with a powerful aro-

matic potion, which exuded from many minute orifices punctured for the purpose.

As it was then near morning, Lady Seymour thought best not to disturb either her father or the sleeping maid, and flung herself upon a divan, hoping to catch an hour's rest before sailing. Daylight broke, and, as may well be conceived, the conflicting events of the night had not been conducive to sleep; but as pleasant reflections of her lover now began to displace the nightmare visions of the mysterious Spaniard, Lucia rose and occupied her time writing a last message to Lawrence.

CHAPTER XVI.

ATTACKED BY PIRATES.

A FEW minutes after Captain Lawrence left the Ladrone Palace, while he was pleasantly brooding over his rose-colored visions of Lady Lucia, the sedan was suddenly stopped by some obstruction in the vicinity of the cliff stair. An angry altercation occurred between some Spanish sailors and the coolie carriers, which called for the Captain's interference.

Thrusting his head out of the window to learn the cause of the row, Lawrence received a stunning blow on the head from a bludgeon, which knocked him back into the bottom of the sedan. Though severely hurt, he did not quite lose his consciousness, for while lying in this dazed state he was fully aware that the carriers had been killed or disabled, and that the sedan had been seized by other strong fellows, who were dashing down the narrow stairway, seeking the landing with the utmost speed possible in the dark, steep passageway.

Lawrence was not long concluding that the armed ruffians were about to murder him, or were, perhaps, taking him on board some piratical craft in the offing, to be held for ransom; a common method of extorting money at the Chinese ports in those days. But the wounded man inclined to the probability of murder, knowing that hundreds of pirates were watching to kill

him. In fact, the resident police had notified him that very day, with positive assurance, that Aloata, the pirate queen, had declared that she would "hang the Yankee Captain in quarters at the gates of the four cities;" meaning Hong Kong, Canton, Wampoa, and Macao.

Happily, Lawrence was well armed, having been frequently warned by the officers of the place to be always prepared for an assault. The belief that he was to be murdered had the effect to rally him quickly as a stimulant would have done. With a desperate effort he succeeded in collecting his senses, and acquiring sufficient strength to act.

Not having power to rise from the floor, he bolstered himself against the cushioned seat of the sedan, and, in spite of his half-stunned condition and the rough motion of the chair, he reached his two hip-pockets and dragged forth his revolvers, though his strength was nearly exhausted by the effort.

Resting quietly a minute, to recover breath, with laborious effort he got his pistols into the required position and let fly, front and back, with both weapons at once. Both carriers fell dead at the same instant, and the sedan went tumbling down the cliff stair, thumping heavily on each stone step as it fell; though it was happily held upright by the long shafts until it reached the landing-place near the water-front.

In its downward tumble the sedan knocked over the crew of ruffians who were descending before it, and sent them headlong to the pier below. But, once upon their feet, the villains whipped out their cutlasses, and, with

an uproar of oaths, rushed upon the sedan, blindly lunging their weapons through the nearest window.

Fortunately for Lawrence, the pirates were too hasty and inconsiderate in their thrusts, as the Captain was still lying upon the floor of the vehicle, instead of sitting on the seat as the assailants supposed. Expecting an attack, Lawrence was fully prepared for the onslaught, and let fly with both pistols into the midst of his foes, fast as he could fire, killing four of the villains and wounding others, who escaped. So astonished were the remainder of the crew at such havoc, accomplished by one whom they thought to be dead, that they fled to the boat, pushed off, and pulled quickly into the offing. If there was a rear guard, the scoundrels became alarmed, took to their heels, and ran back up the stairway, for nothing more transpired through the night.

When the battle was over, Lawrence found himself faint and dizzy, and he soon swooned completely away. He lay for an hour in the folds of the soft cushions ere he rallied; the shock of thumping from stair to stair had proved too much for his wounded head.

When at length he came to his senses, for a while his perceptions were aroused to the utmost by the peril of his situation, and, not realizing how long he had been unconscious, he lay watching and waiting during the next half hour, listening for stealthy footsteps on the stairs, coming from above or below.

When rallied sufficiently to crawl out of the sedan, the Captain groped his way up between the damp walls of the dripping cliff. The moon had gone down, leaving the cliff stair black as a dungeon, so that Lawrence could

but feel his way from one stone step to another, climbing over the dead carriers whom he had shot, and having frequently to sit for a time on the wet stones to recover his strength.

When he reached Queen Street, not a soul was to be seen, not even his coolie carriers, whom he supposed to be dead. Resting after his toilsome ascent, he at length plodded on in the direction of the Drinker House, which he reached after a tiresome walk without further interruption. Entering the house by his latch-key, he sought his own rooms for a while, and at length roused out Dr. Greville to examine his wounds and set the night watch, which had been neglected during the Captain's absence.

After hearing Lawrence's story, Greville called out Tom to stand guard, and proceeded to clip away the hair about the wound so that he could dress it. The head was found badly bruised by some blunt weapon; and though the bone was indented, it was not fractured. The left eye was much swollen, and the conjunctiva bloodshot, so the doctor assumed that the brain was injured sufficiently to induce high fever, and probably erysipelas would supervene.

Making a short story of the affair to the doctor, and rejecting his advice to retire, Lawrence put on his overcoat and went out to walk on the battlement, feeling too nervous to remain quiet anywhere. For a while Greville kept company, but when he had smoked out his Manila he returned to his room, leaving the Captain in the care of Long Tom.

After pacing the rampart for a while, with no sound to people the darkness but the sonorous calls of the

sentry on board the men-of-war, and the occasional weighing anchor by some vessel bent upon an early start at the turning tide, Lawrence's thoughts began to revert to the momentous events of the past night. Having become fairly tranquilized, he ceased his nervous stride on the granite walk, and leaned calmly against the northern port of the bastion, gazing off upon the swarm of sampans, and the larger vessels beyond.

Suddenly a fancied outcry rang out upon the night air, like the wild appeal of a woman in distress. The nervous man sprang over to the western embrasure, and peered wildly through the gloom in the direction of the Ladrone Palace. The cry for help sounded — if there is tangible sound to a fancied mental distress — far down the western shore in the direction of the embassy. The voice was certainly that of the girl he loved.

As nothing more occurred to attract his attention, the excited fellow concluded that it was but a freak of his disordered brain. Turning to the stars, those soothsayers of long-gone ages, that have tricked the people of all time, and men of every acquirement, the superstitious seaman was startled to behold the complete conjunction of the planets above him. Jupiter, the star of his own nativity; and Saturn, the natal star of the girl he adored.

While pondering, in wonder and awe, the solemn problem of horoscopy, arguing whether it embodied a real meaning, or acquired a tangible influence over the lives of men; Lawrence became aware that a cold, creeping influence was stealing over him, as ghostly and freezing as the hand of Death. Strange visions came and went

before his dazed eyes, as fantastic and delusive as the phantasms of a desert mirage.

While the excited sailor was still looking upon the conjoined stars, they were suddenly shut out from his view, as by an intervening mist. Yet Lawrence was certain that it was not a cloud that had hidden the planets, as elsewhere over all the dark canopy the stars twinkled clearly. As he continued to gaze, the ghostly mistiness began to take form, and soon shaped itself into the recumbent figure of a kneeling girl; whose outstretched hands were reaching toward the blended planets, now hidden by her mist-form.

The bewildered captain soon began to realize that the mist-maiden was his own Lucia. Her fair face had become transfigured by some supernatural agency. Her disheveled hair fell loosely about her spirit-form, like the drooping wings of a white dove spent with flight. As he watched the etherealized girl with bated breath, awed by the sacredness of the scene, he saw that the suppliant hands were clasped in anguished appeal no more; but were now folded lightly upon her tranquil bosom, as became one made grateful by a divine bequest.

Presently a skyward rift broke through the star-gemmed canopy, disclosing a soft unearthly light diffused from the far beyond — as if reflected from the throne of grace. There, enshrined as in a halo, appeared the sainted-face of the Countess, bending earthward from the jasper walls of heaven to bless her child; her countenance as like to her daughter's as is the rose to a kindred bud. Slowly the mist-maiden and the spirit-

mother began to fade away, vanishing as the morning vapors on meadow and mere recede from the warmth of the rising sun.

In that brief ecstatic moment, Charles Lawrence was induced to believe that he too had been brought under the guardian care of Lucia's sainted mother. Else, why had the impenetrable earth-veil been lifted from his eyes of clay, permitting him to behold the ethereal soul-spirit of one of God's anointed?

With a sigh of regret at his abrupt recall earthward — as one moans a new transgression which may bar him from heaven — Lawrence wondered why he had never acquired sufficient purity to have beheld such a vision before. After recounting most of the momentous events of his life, without becoming enlightened, he prepared to retire to his room for an hour's repose.

Suddenly, as he turned to go, his attention was called to the signal rockets sent up by two vessels far down the western shore. He remained out long enough to see the fast-boats make sail, weigh their anchors, and hasten to the westward with the rising breeze and the last run of the flood-tide.

Little did he dream to what extent those nefarious craft were linked with the destinies of himself and the woman he loved. How it would have shocked his tender heart to have known that the Pirate Queen had confronted his beloved Lucia in her holy of holies, and had contrived a subtle, murderous method of testing her love for him, as woman's affection was never tested before.

The Captain retired to his room for a few hours' sleep, for his wounded head began to trouble him severely.

He left word with Tom to call him when the tide began to run ebb, or the Greyhound showed signs of getting under-way. Bruised and suffering as he was, he soon sank into an uneasy slumber, sleeping until the sunrise-gun aroused him. He then sprang up, took his spy-glass and went out to pace the rampart and watch for the Seymours.

The same signal-gun awoke the Earl and the Admiral, and both dressed and made ready to embark. Lady Seymour had been up for an hour past. Having called Irene, and dressed suitably for shipboard, Lucia left the maid and tire-woman to pack her few remaining toilet articles, ready for the coming boat, and spent her last moments writing a farewell message to her lover.

On their way to the boat, Lady Lucia and the maid led the party to the cliff stair, down which they ran with the mirth of children, so exhilarated by the fresh morning air. They soon came to the dead carriers, two rough, brutal-looking Spaniards, who had evidently been bent upon mischief. The girls were horrified at the disclosure, and would proceed no farther until the gentlemen overtook them.

When her father and uncle approached, Lady Lucia pointed to the dead men. The Earl called upon Chung Wah to thrust the bodies aside, so that the ladies could pass, when the party proceeded until they came to the sedan and the other dead pirates. Admiral Seymour explained that somebody had evidently been attacked during the night, while on the way down to his boat.

He further stated that when the carriers were shot

the sedan slid down to the landing, where a terrible hand-to-hand fight had ensued with others of the villainous gang: and, judging from the numerous sword thrusts and bullet holes through the sides of the sedan, it had been a desperate encounter. While the four dead Spaniards and Chinamen found on the pier showed that the occupant of the chair must have won the battle, and probably embarked in safety in his boat.

Such affrays were so common in China ports in those days, that not much notice was taken of them, unless it chanced that some notable person was kidnapped or killed. Even then, the criminals were seldom caught and brought to justice.

CHAPTER XVII.

DEPARTURE OF THE SEYMOURS.

CAPTAIN LAWRENCE was out on the rampart when his friends embarked at the cliff stair in the Admiral's gig. The boat had been sent from the flag-ship to transport the Seymours to the Greyhound, the British vessel which was to take them home to England.

The boat came swiftly along, buoyed by the young ebb, pulling with a short, springy stroke of the oars, well adapted to a swift running tide. Lady Lucia's loving eyes were alert to catch a glimpse of her lover, and she soon discovered his stalwart figure mounted upon the parapet, ready to hail his approaching friends. Upon a hint from his niece, the kind-hearted Admiral ordered the coxswain to sheer in and hug the shore, going near enough to the Drinker jetty for the party to speak with Captain Lawrence.

It needed but a slight détour in the boat's course to take her inside the fleet of sampans, and to convey the party within easy hail of the sea-wall. As the gig swept up to the embrasure where Lawrence stood, her rapid way was checked, the oars flung up, and the whole group of Seymours exchanged a hearty greeting with the Captain. The old Earl ended his cordial salutation by saying, —

"Remember your promise to us, Captain Lawrence, of

an early visit to Moorland Castle." And, with a look of affection and paternal pride cast down upon his daughter, he added, "I think you will find one of us there glad to greet you, come whenever you will. Accept my best wishes for a pleasant passage home."

The old nobleman lifted his hat with a courtly air and gracious bow to his prospective son-in-law; while his blushing daughter chimed in like a glad echo to the father's greeting, with a brief message full of meaning as a bird song, —

"Yes, Captain Lawrence; please remember all your promises, and your new friends will certainly never forget theirs."

As the boat was slowly drifting away from the battlement, it was only by the utmost expedition that Lady Lucia succeeded in tossing up a dainty little package, which she flung over the parapet with a ripple of girlish laughter, ending by kissing her hand to her lover as she resumed her seat between the rime-headed old noblemen.

The oars were let fall, the coxswain put his helm a-starboard, and the boat sped away with her precious freight, winding a devious course through the sampans and among the junks and foreign shipping, until she reached the Greyhound. Every stroke of the bending oars was bannered by a tiny pena kerchief in the hand of Lady Seymour.

Once on board, Lady Lucia took her station at the taffrail, with glass in hand, prepared to watch her lover to the last. The old Admiral entered into her feelings with the sympathy of an elder brother. He ordered

down the British ensign at the peak, and together the uncle and niece pinned on Lucia's tear-stained kerchief to the after leech of the flag; then the two jolly comrades hoisted the colors to the gaff, bearing the weeping girl's symbol of love.

With his glass fixed steadily upon the stern of the Greyhound, Lawrence discovered what was being done. And when the colors with the new addition were hoisted at the peak, the lover waved his hat in recognition of the white guidon of his darling.

The Greyhound had her anchor hove short and her sails all set a-taunto when the boat arrived, requiring but a few minutes to weigh anchor and head the ship down the Ly-Moon on her homeward way. With almost ceaseless watching, Lawrence kept his glass fixed upon the fair figure sitting at the stern of the departing ship. But a moment since he was looking down into those dear blue eyes, made bluer and more lustrous with an outspoken love; now his heart began to sink with a weight of anguish hard to endure.

Nearer and nearer the vessel drew to North Head, which must soon shut out the loved one from his sight for many a long month. Lower and lower sank the white sails of the fast receding ship, until two loving hearts began to sadden with the sense of despair creeping over them like a flood of years. Alas! the joy of existence, which was so bright and buoyant a half-hour since, now grew dark and dismal as the grave. Foot by foot the jutting headland shut out the lovers from view, snatching them from each other while they were yet flinging their last kisses over the intervening sea.

With a sigh which was near akin to a sob, and a brain reeling with excitement, Lawrence turned his swimming eyes to the dainty package which Lucia flung up as she passed. The half-dazed fellow was recalled to the parcel by its delicious perfume, — a special fragrance which spoke to his heart like a spirit whisper from his departed love. It was a rare Oriental odor that had long since characterized his Lucia by its presence, made known to other sense than seeing.

After weighing with profound deliberation every inflection of the superscription, Lawrence opened Lucia's package with the utmost care. The first token of remembrance which he brought forth was a shining brown tress, found entwined about the rosebud and *vanda lowii* vine which Lucia had worn the night before.

Delving deeper into the precious package, he found a note bearing the mysterious insignia of two cooing doves, with bills entwined, which were stamped upon the seal. What wonder that his sailor heart made a bound, as if to break from its prison walls; and a chill of awe stole over him as he seemed to feel the audible beating of another heart against his own, until his hair stood erect like the uplifted feathers of excited birds.

Lady Lucia's missive bore evidence of receiving her latest thoughts of her lover, ere she left the dear old palace home for the boat. With quivering lips and eyes filled with tears, Lawrence gloated over what he discovered therein, while he read as follows: —

MY DEAR LAWRENCE, — I could not sleep with so much on my mind. And, as all our preparations are made for sailing, I am devoting the last minute to you. My darling, promise me not to

laugh at what I am going to disclose; I just wish to tell you that I am loving you more than ever this morning, and it now seems harder than ever to part with my noble sailor boy.

O my precious one! how can your little Lucia ever repay you for the great mantle of love which you have cast about her? Do come to us quickly, after your arrival in America. Heaven keep you! my own dear Lawrence, my best of all God's gifts to woman. Love me, dearest — love me — love me! and hasten on the wings of the wind to your

LUCIA.

P. S. I hasten to reopen this, as I have forgotten to impart a very grave secret. I just wish to whisper in your ear that I have deposited lots of fresh kisses on the enclosed rosebud.

There! silly girl that I am, I have blotted my writing with a great splash of tear-drops. But they are not tears of regret, dearest; that is, I think they are not. O my beloved! whatever they are, they have blinded me so that I cannot see to write another word. Remember me nightly in your prayers. Good-by. — From your own loving

LUCIA.

The contents of Lucia's outspoken missive made Lawrence's brain reel like a storm-lashed billow. Dismay seized upon him, to think that he should permit himself to be separated from his betrothed. But it was now too late to revoke the error, and again his quick, nervous step rang upon the stony rampart like a throb of anguish.

At this critical juncture Dr. Greville made his appearance, and announced that the waiters were coming around with the morning coffee and toast, usually served in bed, and urged the Captain to come in for a needed lunch, after his long night-watch. Lawrence declined to go in, and requested that the coolies be

ordered to serve the lunch on the rampart, as he was feeling too uneasy to go to his room at present.

This was done; and while the two sat sipping their coffee, Braybrook, the mate of the Fleetwing, joined the party. He came early to report the well-doing of the ship, which was still in the dry-dock at Matherson's shipyard, undergoing repairs. At the conclusion of the morning lunch, the doctor took occasion to inspect the Captain's wound. Lifting the Panama, the physician removed the dressing, and exclaimed with astonishment at the state of the wound, —

"Oh, sir, your wound looks angry and fretted. I'm afraid you are worried about something. If you keep on after this fashion, we'll have you in a tip-top fever before night. You know well enough that there's no healing a scalp-wound with a hot, harassed brain under it. Besides, you have not yet built up your normal nerve-force, since your last wounds healed."

"Truly, doctor, I am feeling feverish and dizzy, and have considerable brain pressure about the forehead. But you must tinker me up, for I have no time to be sick just now, with a China cargo to purchase for a home voyage."

"I will administer a drop of aconite on the spot, to alleviate the fever. But if your mind keeps on laboring in this way I shall insist upon the bed; in fact, the sooner you turn in the better for all concerned."

The mate now joined the group, and the ship's officers combined in requesting the Captain to tell them what all this meant; and Lawrence briefly related the incidents of the affray during the previous night. The

mate was then requested to seek the Chief of Police at once, and ask to have an officer sent to take the depositions, not only of the Captain, but also of the coolie carriers, if they were living; while Braybrook was to learn all he could about the six dead scoundrels at the cliff stair.

Discussing the night assault had the effect to increase the fever. The head seemed bursting with pain, and ophthalmia supervened, until Lawrence became too blind to find the way to his room without help.

At the nine o'clock breakfast, when a dozen shipmasters, together with the whole Drinker family, met at the morning meal, Dr. Greville reported the whole affair. This brought the matter close home to them all, to think that, with all Lawrence's precautions, he came near being murdered in their midst.

Captain Drinker at once sent for his carriers, who had the sedan in charge. The coolies appeared with their heads bound up, having received scalp wounds. They assumed guilty, sheepish looks; for their sedan had disappeared when they recovered from their swoon, and they expected a severe reprimand for its loss, if not imprisonment for what had happened to Captain Lawrence.

They reported that their path was obstructed by a dozen armed Spanish and Chinese sailors. When their passenger put out his head to learn the cause, he was struck down with a club; then they were also knocked down and left insensible. When the coolies recovered, the sedan was gone. They made their way home as best they could, feeling indignant that Captain Law-

rence should get other carriers, and leave them lying in the street for dead. But in the morning, when they searched for the sedan in its usual place, they were alarmed to find it missing, and knew they would be blamed for not notifying the police on the previous night. They had since learned that the Captain had got home in some way, and would perhaps know about the lost sedan.

Captain and Mrs. Drinker rose at once to go to Lawrence's room, and requested the doctor to order their steward to prepare whatever he required for his patient's breakfast. Some of the other captains requested leave to visit their brother master. This Greville forbade, stating how serious the patient's condition was; and further hinted that something was agitating the patient's mind, which he requested Mrs. Drinker to inquire into, as they were on most friendly terms.

When the Drinkers arrived at the sick-room, the police and notary public were there, taking the Captain's deposition. Soon after the notarial seal was stamped on the written evidence, another police officer came to report that six other desperadoes were found shot, and either killed or mortally wounded. One of the pirates remained sufficiently conscious to make a dying confession. He stated they belonged to one of Ching Along's vessels, and were sent to kidnap the Yankee Captain.

He further confessed that there had been more than three hundred thirsty daggers watching for opportunity to kill the Captain, and that he would have been killed

long before, had not their queen threatened to yard-arm the assassin who harmed him. For Aloata had sworn to kidnap or kill Captain Lawrence herself, and he had better be prepared to shoot her at sight, as she would accomplish her design in spite of all the fleets in the world.

When the affair had been fully talked over, the doctor requested all strangers to leave the sick-room, leaving Mrs. Drinker to probe the patient's mind in a quiet sisterly way. Through all Lawrence's previous sickness the kind-hearted lady had been most attentive, and the lover now had no hesitation in baring his heart to her importunate sympathies. Mrs. Drinker soon learned that the fever attributed to his wound was largely owing to the Captain's distress at parting with Lady Seymour. She could well sympathize with him on such a subject. The graceful American lady was delighted to learn that one of her own countrymen had won the beautiful English peeress, and asked permission to impart the pleasant news to Captain Drinker. The request was granted, though Lawrence was averse to having his engagement made public while he remained in port. This matter being settled, Mrs. Drinker left the wounded man to the effect of a soporific which the doctor had administered for his persistent insomnia.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE PREDICTED GALE.

AFTER a night of unquiet sleep, Captain Lawrence found it impossible to keep in bed a moment longer, and sometime during the morning watch he sprang up, dressed, put on his monkey jacket and went out upon the rampart, hoping to walk off the terrible uneasiness which pervaded his nervous system.

Mr. Morey was on guard, and was glad to see the Captain emerge from his quarters, as the night was damp and dismal, and the morning was breaking dull and oppressive, there being a negative atmosphere hard to endure. For a while, the Captain was not found in a talkative mood, having left his bed for the sole purpose of getting rid of the fidgety feeling that had assailed him.

As daylight broke over the bay, the smoky appearance of the night disappeared, disclosing a wild and angry look to the sky. It was of a cold, hard, steel-gray color, which predicted a storm. The few high-flying scuds then visible were torn to tatters, as by a war of the elements in the high upper air.

This windy aspect could not but make Lawrence feel anxious for the safety of the Greyhound; for it was near the change of monsoons, and the gales at such times are the most terrific of their kind. For a week past the

weather-wise of the port had been daily predicting a typhoon, but as the old sea-dogs of the China Sea are always croaking about typhoons at the change of monsoons, new-comers are apt to ridicule the universal scare; as the morbid fears of local seamen lead to a vast amount of overcaution.

Captain Royal, of the Greyhound, had given due attention to the repeated warnings of the Harbor Master and other meteorologists, and delayed his appointed time of sailing until a day after the moon changed; arguing from fair logistics that the moon phases were the dominant elements of atmospheric disturbance. But the Captain did not perhaps give due prominence to the subsequent phases of the lunar perigee and increased declination which followed a few days after the change.

Though Lawrence became thoroughly aroused by the ugly appearance, he tried to comfort himself by recounting, *per contra:* that the Greyhound was one of the stoutest of the Indiamen, and was well manned and well mastered. He felt certain that all which good seamanship could accomplish for the safety of the ship and the comfort of her passengers would be done.

When thus pacing the battlement with anxious strides, the Captain began to observe that the whole swarm of sampans and other small fry were scattering, like ducks from a gun-fire. It was not long before these defenseless craft were followed by the clumsy junks, and many of the smaller ships — those not well-found in ground-tackle — all of which were hurriedly lifting their anchors and hastening away to find shelter among the snug inlets of the opposite coast of Kow-Loon.

In his present state of anxiety, Lawrence was glad to see Uncle Joe approaching, the most weather-wise of his officers. The crippled old man came hobbling along, and met the Captain with his usual cheery greeting, —

"Gude mawnin', Cap'n!"

"Good morning, Mr. Bailey."

"Well, sah, dat ere gran' ole ship, de Greyhound, am gorn skootin' 'long fore de wind, like ar goney on der wing."

"I hope so, Uncle Joe; she went out finely. But what do you think about the weather? It looks threatening, and I am getting anxious about it."

"Yis, sah. De pesky wedder am what brought dish chile out so 'arly. Dese yere ole broken bones o' mine bin gettin' awful kinky fru de nite. Dat means wet wedder, sah."

"But it's the wind that I am thinking about. The rain will do no damage to my friends on the Greyhound."

"Tru' 'nuf, Cap'n. I specs dere will be plenty ob wind too. But what dis niggar wanter spoke 'bout am ar dreffle wission ob squally wedder, wid ar shipwreck hove in. I'se bin hab seb'ral 'speriences ob dat kine, but dis yere shipwreck beats all dish chile kno' 'bout."

"But I want you to look about you and give me your opinion of the weather. I should be sorry to have the Greyhound caught in a typhoon."

"Can't jes teld, Cap'n, wheder de wet will cum fo' de wind, but dar's gwine ter be ar big shindy ob some kine. I duzen jes like de lukes ob dem yere mack'el-backs, up 'loft dar. An' den, dose yere pesky gulls am dreffle 'tic'lar ter squall mo'n dey need ter. Dose birds am

cute critters, sah; seed um ilin' dar fedders, jes as de sailor man ile his sou-wester befo' ar gale."

"Yes, Uncle Joe, I have noticed all these things; and I feel sorry that Captain Royal sailed in the face of the ugly moon-phases which now prevail."

"I's dreffle sorry, too, sah. Dat ship am jes totin' out dat nice ole Earl, an' his darter. Lubly Leddy, dat gal be, wid 'er soft blue eyes an' 'er butiful smile. 'Pears like one ob de Lawd's spirit-gals, cum down frum heaben ter hubber roun' my Cap'n. She ain't none ob yer common-clay gals, like dese yere udder folks."

"I am glad you like her, Uncle Joe."

"Yis, sah. An' what's mo' lubly, dat gal jes tuck Joe Bailey's han' inter her leedle pink an' white flipper, an' tank dis niggar fo' killin' ole Ching Along. Ah, Cap'n! we uns mus' ax de Lawd ter tek car' ob dat gal. Fo' sartin sure, it am gwine ter blow ar snorter."

"Lady Seymour is so good and beautiful that I can't but hope the Lord will make some special providence for her. Don't forget her in your prayers, Uncle Joe, for I think God listens to your supplications as to few other men among us."

"O Cap'n Lawrence! I'd gin my life, enny day, ter sabe dat gal. But, sah, dis niggar am too po' shucks fur de Lawd ter mine much 'bout dis chile's prayer. Why, sah, it tuck thirty years prayin' befo' Gord A'mighty let dis chile kill dat ole Mocha Dick! I's jes one po' mis'ble brack man. Why, Cap'n, Missie Dinah Coon, my yaller gal, up ter Bedford, use ter sez dat dis niggar yam nuffin' but clam-dough an' lamp-black. An' my pertic'lar 'pinion yam dat de gal wuz rite."

"Uncle Joe, you are as good in the sight of the Lord as the best of us. Oblige me by seeing how the barometer stands, and report at once."

"Yis, sah. I specs dat ole critter am gittin' purty cranky fo' dis time."

Lawrence paced the granite walk with increased anxiety until Mr. Bailey returned, saying, —

"De b'rom'ter am werry low, sah. She am gone down ter twenty-eight; an' I tink she am gwine ter tumble mo' 'n dat, sah; fo' de mercury am dreffle holler on de top on 't."

"Much too low for a ship to go to sea with lady passengers on board. I wish Captain Royal had not sailed so hastily. Would that he might come back before the storm breaks. But, then, it requires greater courage to put back into port than to face the worst gale that ever blew. I suppose Royal will do as I should, were I in his place — keep right on, and face the gale."

"De wedder am gittin' mo' nasty, sah. De swash 'long shore makes sight ob sobbin' an' sighin', like ef de fun'ral ob sumbody wuz cumin'. I's 'clined ter tink it am gwine ter be wet fo' de wind cums, 'cause de gulls am doin' lots ob ilin' 'bout dar jackets. De sun am tryin' ter pop out an' luke arter tings, but he can't do 't. So he makes hisself dreffle busy makin' sun-dogs. An' dem yere doggies means wind, de wust sort."

"Yes; a gale will soon be upon us, and it will blow hard before it is over. The upward curl of the mare's-tails betokens rain; not so surely as if seen at night, but sure enough; so the rain will likely precede the wind."

"It am 'bout ekal, Cap'n. Dere's one which, an' one

todder. But my ole shin bones am 'clined ter de which fust. Arter de rains cums, den it am gwine ter blow like all possess."

So the two watchful seamen read and revealed the wild portents of the coming storm; for the furious conflict of antagonistic elements was glassed upon the atmospheric mirror hours before its birth. To those competent to interpret the upheaving throes of Nature in such an hour, it becomes a pleasure and a pastime to detect the parturient labors of a monster gale.

It is a sight to terrify the boldest. Doubly fearful to those long inured to the sea, who have endured the sad havoc made by the mad winds and the angry waters, when their frail ships were crushed down upon the beam's-end, and there held by the fierce grip of the gale, to be battered and wrecked by the ghostly billows of the infuriated ocean.

Some time after the morning lunch the mate made his appearance, and, being a weather-wise man, his opinion of the weather was solicited by the Captain. Braybrook agreed with most of the prognostics already elicited — that there were indications of a heavy gale. But, having no loved one upon the sea, he said, "Let her blow! the Fleetwing is cooped up in the dock as snug as a sitting hen. I have housed all her top-hamper above the cross-trees, and the worst gale that ever blew can't harm her."

The storm signs continued to increase throughout the day. Being in a prolific region for cyclonic gales, every precaution was taken throughout the port to meet the wild fury of the wind, as great havoc is usually created

among ships not having sufficient ground-tackle to avoid dragging their anchors.

It was believed by the old residents of the port that the Greyhound had probably held good winds long enough to carry her well to the south of Pratas Shoal, which would place her in position favorable to ride out the resistless vortex of the storm. If this proved to be the case, the vessel would work in to the southeast over toward Luzon, and might escape the worst of the gale, as the Manila side of the sea is considered a better position to meet a typhoon than down in the bight of Hainan.

Early in the evening the gale set in with wind and rain, increasing rapidly through the night, and ended in one of the most devastating typhoons ever known in the China Sea. Some of the new-comers, vessels in ballast, loomed so high out of water that every anchor which they possessed was insufficient to prevent their dragging ashore. Three ships dashed end on against the cliff, and ground off their sterns till the transom timbers were laid bare, when they sank at their anchors and became a total loss.

The historic balcony and the wide, overhanging roof of Ladrone Palace were torn off, and carried half across the bay; and the former was never again replaced to its full size. So that the Seymour family were deemed most fortunate in escaping such a frightful disaster, for the Palace was drenched with the down-pouring rain until even the countless rodents in the cellar were drowned out by the deluge.

CHAPTER XIX.

LOVE AT THE DAGGER'S POINT.

THE first night of the storm proved a sleepless one for Captain Lawrence. A severe traumatic fever set in during the night, and before morning erysipelas fastened upon the scalp wound, until the head and face became frightfully swollen. The Captain remained sane until the gale was pronounced a typhoon, and then became delirious.

When the wind began to shriek along the sea-wall, and rock the granite buildings to their foundations, then the sick man began to rave. And when the squalls came in gusts of wind and deluge of rain, dashing against the house with the shock of ocean waves, which threatened to tear every movable thing from its fastenings, then a wild, uncontrollable mania seized upon the patient's mind, most distressing to behold.

It now required the utmost vigilance of the officers to restrain the insane man from going to the rescue of the Greyhound. He moaned constantly about the error of sailing during such a gale, and at length became terrified by the delusion that the ship and all on board were lost. In his worst delirium he disclosed a most harrowing description of the storm, entering into the minutest details of a frightful shipwreck: portraying the storm-lashed vessel so vividly as to impress all with horror at the picture he drew.

The febrile crisis at length came on during the seventh night of Lawrence's sickness. The fever then steadily subsided, until the patient was wholly free from aberration of mind, and sank into quiet, restful slumber, the first for many days. Before retiring that night, Dr. Greville pronounced the Captain out of danger. Mr. Morey was left in charge of the first watch as nurse and guard until midnight, when he was to call out old Tom and the doctor to relieve him.

The evening was warm and oppressive. The flood tide brought with it a sultry, enervating south wind, that compelled the night watch to throw open the door and windows of the sick-room. The officer was in and out of the chamber, carefully watching the patient, but spending most of his time on the battlement, pacing back and forth to the outer bastion, where he could overlook the water-front and get better air.

At times the second mate allowed himself a moment's rest by leaning against the parapet, and looking at the vessels, while he smoked his cheroot, as the physician had forbidden the watchers to smoke about the sick-room. While Morey was thus standing moodily in the western embrasure, looking out over the starlit bay, his ear caught the low persuasive voice of a woman, calling to him as from the heavens above.

Casting his eyes quickly aloft, as when one scans the midnight sky in search of a coming squall, Morey sought in vain for the dulcet tones that had fallen so sweetly upon his ear. Seeing nothing ghostly in the skyward direction, he turned seaward to seek for the supernatural voice so strangely addressed to him.

Standing quietly in the eastern embrasure, he saw a young, fresh-faced woman confronting him, who seemed to the mystified seaman to have just dropped from heaven or emerged from the sea. The apparition seemed to be a lady, judging from her gentle voice and suave manner, together with the rich attire in which she was dressed.

Doffing his tarpaulin to the preternatural creature, with the usual deference of his class, Morey advanced toward the statuesque figure with hesitating steps, and asked if he could be of any service to her. The prompt answer of the spectral creature ought to have disabused the officer's mind as to her being of ghostly fabric, —

"Yes, you can be of service. Go and place these flowers where the sick Captain can inhale their fresh perfume. Let him smell their rare fragrance at once while he sleeps. When he wakes, tell him that they came from a friend of Lady Seymour's. Go quickly, ere the night air steals the health-giving odor from the blossoms."

"Who shall I say sent the flowers?"

"I will bear my own message as soon as Captain Lawrence is able to see me. Hasten, before the freshness exudes from the blossoms."

The woman's imperative gesture easily overawed the officer, and prevented further importunity. Morey obeyed her command with alacrity, but not without casting furtive glances behind to observe whither the specter winged her way, for the superstitious man was convinced that she was not human.

"Oh, I wasn't fooled for a minute," he is reported to

have said. "The light kites the critter had on weren't enough to hide the wings she kept tucked away a-starboard and a-port."

When about to enter the chamber, Morey cast back a final look in the direction of the apparition; but he discovered only a dim shadowy outline where the woman had stood, — the mental semblance which she had impressed upon his retina.

Could the compliant officer have witnessed the facial change of the woman after his departure, it would have served to disenchant his mind of the delusion. When Morey neared the sick-room, Aloata put off her assumed ghostliness and aroused to action, like an eagle pluming itself for flight. Stepping quickly into the northern embrasure, she signaled to an armed boat that was lying on her oars just beyond the stone jetty awaiting a call.

While overlooking the stealthy approach of the cutter, which pulled in with muffled oars, Aloata's handsome face grew dark and forbidding, lowering with evil portents, like a rising storm. Standing there with head erect and flashing eyes, every movement and aspect of the woman implied mischief to whoso came beneath her vengeful hand.

She was the same Aloata who had invaded the Ladrone Palace at midnight, now bent upon another murderous deed, soon as her victim and his guard were lulled into unconsciousness by the toxic perfume of her flowers. Regardless of the danger, she had assumed the sacred mission to avenge her dead husband, the pirate king; and she stood there, a beautiful demoness of

retribution, impatiently nursing her just hatred until her classic face became distorted with ferocity.

Aloata was indeed a terrible embodiment of tragic beauty, innocent of all crime in the murderous retaliation she now sought to accomplish. High as the highest heavens with attractive charms and fascinating graces — in her better moods — above the generality of her sex. Who shall judge of the weight of her wrongs, or the terrible incentive which beset her great heart in this hour?

The texture of woman's thoughts and the caliber of her heart can be told somewhat by the color she wears, so that it becomes the gentle sex to fly their adornments modestly, lest they display their inmost soul in its true nakedness to a close observer.

Men are well said to be largely color-blind to-day, as both sexes are believed to have been afflicted a thousand years ago. Most active women now cultivate a taste for the iridescent hues, and have a foible for gaudy colors, according to the nature and tensity of their organization.

Ornate dress and gorgeous adornments were a marked egoism of the pirate queen, as disclosed by the jeweled baldrick of scarlet seen beneath her silken toga, and the crimson plumes of the *paradisea rubra* which drooped from her Spanish hat. And well they expressed a fixed law of Aloata's nature, for the fierce and fiery queen was ever consuming with an innate demand for action; a passionate craving for perils that please, and dangers that dazzle but daunt not.

When the armed boat softly bumped her elastic

fenders against the escarpment, Aloata hailed the officer in a suppressed voice, making an imperious gesture for him to come ashore, —

"*Alerte!*" this being the crew's password for the night.

"*Si, Señora Capitana!*" came rumbling up to the embrasure, in answer, from the grim old pirate in command of the ten armed ruffians.

"*Poco a poco! Señors,*" — "Softly, sirs."

And the big-bearded villains abated their zeal, and climbed quietly into the bastion where the queen stood, without difficulty, as the tide was very high, the spring flood having yet two hours to run. When the crew were gathered about her, Aloata gave them minute instructions, bidding them guard every outlet, disturb nothing, and harm no one. But, in case they were discovered and opposed, — here her handsome face darkened with the gloom of a sirocco, — then, —

"*Guerra al cuchillo! Señors,*" — "War to the knife, sirs;" which was uttered between her shut teeth with the sibilant hiss of a serpent.

With patience and care, Morey applied the fragrant blossoms for the sick Captain to inhale, until the sleeping patient seemed to enjoy the narcotic perfume. A slow-dawning smile at length broke over Lawrence's face, and the softly modulated name of "Lucia" stole into glad utterance from his parched lips.

In the meantime the officer had also inhaled the aromatic odor of the flowers until a soothing sense of oblivion also oppressed him, and an unconquerable languor made him drunk with sleep. Intent upon his duty, he

sank upon his knees by the bedside, while still administering the potent charm hidden among the flowers; until he fell, first upon the edge of the bed, then upon the Turkey rug at his feet. While the wounded Captain continued deepening his respiration until his breathings were stertorous.

Not a minute passed after Morey fell upon the carpet in profound sopor, before Aloata stood with folded arms at the bedside. With stern, calm face she gazed with absorbing interest upon the manly features of the sleeping hero. Lawrence had become heated and flushed with recurrent fever, from inhaling the subtle soporific, and his lips were now parted with a winsome smile, like one reveling in a dream of new-found joys.

Who can portray the profound emotions of a woman's untamed heart when, coming with fierce intent to murder, she discovers that her victim is too lovable and manly to kill? Slowly and steadily the fierce young queen lost the hideous expression of rage which had glowered so darkly on her brow. She now stood there studiously absorbed in the pleasing appearance of the wounded man, who lay so completely at the mercy of the assassin's hand that she could safely delay the fatal blow. With cruel nonchalance, Aloata delayed the brutal deed, that a truly lovable woman might philosophize over her victim's subtle power to win the esteem of the noblest of her sex.

And what must have been the thoughts of the five armed pirates whose grim faces were seen peering in at the chamber door, — rare lovers of skillful murder, — standing with drawn cutlasses lying at rest in the hollow

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of their arms, their fiendish eyes glaring with wolfish eagerness to witness the deft hand of their queen complete her sworn task of assassination?

But, alas! what an untoward change at length comes over the queen's just relenting face when she remembers her oft recorded oath of retribution for the death of her king. To be thus caught showing a feminine weakness could but intensify her hate of this man. How terrible the human visage may become in such moments of rage! Gleams of brain-lightning flashed from Aloata's fierce black eyes; her thin, pale lips were compressed as she again endeavored to nerve herself for the hateful task; lips whose cupid-curves seemed but a moment since to have been formed only for the dainty allurements of love.

With a fierce, impetuous motion, Aloata now flung aside the pongee toga which lightly enveloped her person, and displayed a belt gleaming with weapons. Slowly and stealthily, the right hand groped deliberately down to the belt of murderous implements, until her jeweled fingers clutched with serpent coils about a dagger's hilt, made brilliant with gems and ivory.

The large grand form of the woman so swayed and quivered with passion that the drooping plumes tossed and trembled on her head. Little by little, unconsciously she unsheathed half the length of the dagger-blade. Bending sinuously over her victim as if intent upon an unerring blow, she paused with bated breath before she struck. With unaccountable deliberation she tarried, while the left hand, which had hung suspended by her side, now slowly clawed its way up into mid-air, above

the bared throat of the smiling sleeper. She stood so immovable that but for the motion of her long taper fingers, hooked like an eagle's talons, and clutching savagely for their prey, one might have deemed her but a marbled semblance of Bellona.

But she slowly aroused herself from her unaccountable daze, and leaned lower over the sleeper, while she brandished her dagger till its bright blade flashed in the gaslight. Still she delayed to deliberately displace the shirt-front over the sleeper's chest; touching with deft finger-tips the left apex of the heart, where she meant to plant her unerring blow.

Great God! what an interposition of mercy is this? The woman's outstretched arm falls at her side. Her blood-seeking dagger sneaks back into its silver sheath, making a noisy clang with its metallic hilt. Aloata's bosom heaves, and her breath comes hard, as with inward sobs; tumultuous as the meeting of resistless tides. A soft light steals through the black shadows upon her face, like gleams of sunlight seen through a forest gloom. So suddenly had this bland radiance blended with the menace of murder that the eye cannot quite disentangle the dawning affection from the sullen hate.

Slowly, and with unmistakable certitude, it had at length dawned upon the tender-hearted woman that she was about to murder her heart's best love, her soul's master! She now looked upon Lawrence as her foe no longer. He had now become to her the one only man to whom woman gladly kneels in homage, ready to kiss the dear hand in loving servitude forever. It had taken time for this strange infatuation to dawn fully upon her;

to fully comprehend that the dove had indeed mastered the vulture in her bosom. But it came with resistless conviction at last, and henceforth Aloata would wear no other image but this man's in her heart, — a rare intaglio bestowed by the gods.

Stooping with willowy fondness over the sleeper, Aloata dwelt long and lovingly in admiring revery upon his manly face; her lips parted with tremulous emotion, and her eyes softened with utmost fondness for her new-found idol. O woman! how swiftly the gentle mercies may dissuade you from fell hate when Love comes to the rescue. Ah! how strange it seems that Cupid can thus dwell so near to a dagger's point!

For nearly an hour the love-stricken queen bent over the bedside of her hero; brooding with the tenderness of Diana when pondering over the sleeping Endymion, and standing silent and statuesque as if chiseled in marble. For a time she remained unconscious to all else, until a viperous touch upon the shoulder from her brigandish officer aroused her to surrounding events.

The pirate audience had expected to see their fiery Bellona exterminate this valiant Proteus of the sea at a blow. But the blood-curdling tragedy had dwindled to a simple farce — an insipid melodrama of love, as unaccountable to the brutal men about the door as were the spherical attractions of the stellar world.

The queen turned upon the piratical intruder with an impatient look of inquiry; and in response the officer contemptuously pointed to the sick man, while he significantly drew a finger across his bearded throat, as an intelligent hint of what was required. Then, gesticulat-

ing toward the sea, he made sign that it was midnight, by thrusting out three of his huge fingers and crossing one of them with his cutlass.

Aloata stamped her foot with impatience. With a look of horror at the thought of harming the hero, she flashed her iridescent orbs upon the too willing murderer, and arrogantly waved the gigantic villain back to his post. He obeyed upon the instant, like an intrusive cur that had received a deserved lash. The gallant bravo came to save his mistress's scruples, hoping to feast his eyes upon the heart-blood of a dying foe. But the unobserving pirate had mistaken the new-born Psyche for the woman-warrior he had brought to shore.

Thrusting aside the stupefied officer lying on the floor, Aloata knelt by the bedside, and with a deft professional touch noted the patient's pulse, listened to his respiration, bared his broad chest until she could inspect his heart-beat, then rose to go. Satisfied that a too hasty abduction would endanger his life, she reluctantly deferred Lawrence's removal to Pulo Gular, her pirate isle, till he should convalesce.

Turning to depart, she stopped, and turned back to hastily scrutinize the ring placed on Lawrence's finger by Lady Lucia. Instead of withdrawing the beautiful gem, as she seemed prompted to do, she matched it by one as beautiful, drawn from her own finger. Then, murmuring an earnest prayer in Spanish for the patient's recovery, she caught up her sombrero from the bed and strode hastily away.

Passing the mystified seamen about the door, without condescending word or sign to any one, she walked

quickly to the embrasure where her boat was moored, into which she descended by means of a slender wall-ladder made of rattan and bamboo, and seated herself at the stern by the side of the boy coxswain, whom she addressed as Pulin.

The crew followed in a noiseless, orderly manner. When all were in their places, the muffled oars were shipped, the boat was thrust out into the tide, and with the rustle of a cat's paw she disappeared into the night gloom which shrouded the bay.

When Dr. Greville heard the Queen-Street clock strike the lonely hour of one, he sprang up and dressed, wondering why Mr. Morey had failed to call him as usual at the midnight hour. While dressing he flung open the door leading to the rampart, and saw that the night was serene and peaceful; having no premonition that Death had just missed a shining mark in their midst, and that to have thus flung wide his door a few minutes since would have been at the risk of receiving a bludgeon, careless whether it maimed or killed.

As Greville was passing around to Lawrence's chamber, he heard a woman's voice hailing a vessel with the watchword "*Alerte!*" and concluded that a Spanish craft was lying just out in the offing. Entering the sick-chamber, his nostrils were greeted with an enchanting fragrance which pervaded everywhere, but he did not discover its source as the flowers had been removed. As the gas had been lowered, he stumbled over Morey's prostrate form upon the floor. The officer was found so stupefied with sleep that he was left in peace till morn-

ing, the physician having no doubt but he had been drinking.

The patient was found in a quiet, restful sleep; his pulse being less sharp and intermittent than it had been, and the previous irritable condition of the nerves showed much less tension and jactitation. Lifting the patient's eyelids to see what degree of frenzy remained, Greville was surprised to find that the pupils were dilated to their utmost, which implied some powerful re-action. But, as the fever had subsided and the patient was sleeping calmly, there seemed no indication of a brain lesion, and the doctor left the sick man to repose.

Strolling out upon the battlement, and wheeling a lounging-chair into the bastion, Greville lighted a cigar, and prepared to pass the remaining night hours reflecting upon the several strange phases of Lawrence's case. While puffing leisurely at his Manila, the doctor's attention was called to the muffled click of capstan pawls somewhere in the offing. By closer attention, he could distinguish the measured steps of seamen tramping about a capstan in the act of weighing anchor. When the cable was short, there came the fluttering of sails while the yards were being swayed aloft. Soon after three monstrous lateen sails could be dimly traced by their blotting out the stars in the northern sky. The breeze was barely enough to waft the vessel by the aid of the tide on her western course. How little the listener knew that he and his patient had recently been in the power of those on board the retreating fast-boat.

At the break of day the doctor called out old Tom to remove Mr. Morey to his chamber, as he still remained

in a limp, lethargic state: and so far no one suspected what had transpired during the night.

When the morning sun shone into the chamber, Captain Lawrence opened his eyes with full consciousness and restored reason; though he was somewhat mystified when the Chinese servants came round with coffee and toast, to be told that he had just recovered from a severe sickness, and must get the doctor's consent before having the refreshments which he asked for.

The new ring found nestled by the side of Lady Lucia's puzzled him greatly, and remained a mystery that time alone could solve. And because it was a mystery, — sailor fashion, — superstition came welling up to the fore-front with the force of a tidal wave, and the weak, convalescing man feared to remove the precious jewel from his finger, where he believed that some friendly unknown had placed it.

Lawrence convalesced rapidly. By the time the Fleetwing had completed her repairs and began to receive cargo, the Captain was up and about. He soon made arrangements to visit Canton and make his final selections of teas and silks, with which to complete his home freight.

CHAPTER XX.

BUYING CARGO AT CANTON.

FOREIGN traders going to purchase goods in the so-called factory districts of Canton are surprised to find that the rich silks and satins in such demand at home are woven upon primitive, ill-constructed hand-looms; while the "factories" themselves are found confined to the lower stories of the tall, brick dwelling-houses, located in the narrow streets within the inner wall of the ancient city.

The wholesale warehouses of these factory districts are found equally novel, being strong granite buildings inclosed within high walls, while never a window is permitted in the lower story except in the rear. The only street entrance is through a high, stone archway by a small mail-clad door.

Within, the wareroom is a large, square, high-studded apartment, dimly lighted by the second-story windows, making it as dismal as the prison of Chillon. The front wall of this impregnable trade-room shows the bare granite; while the two sides and back of the store appear to be a mass of cupboards, reaching to the height of ten feet, and are stained black, which greatly adds to the gloom of the place.

Cargoes are usually selected by samples, where the *hong*-merchant is known to be a man of integrity.

When the purchaser indicates what kind of goods he requires, a salesman seizes the handles of what seems a large drawer, and drags out what proves to be a long counter on wheels, which is run out half the length of the room. This counter is filled with drawers containing the goods called for by the trader.

After the purchase has been completed, by selecting the desired samples and making memoranda of the amount of such goods required, then that counter is run back in place, and another drawn out containing the second kind of goods asked for. So on to the end, until the full cargo is purchased by the sample goods shown the trader at the warehouse in the factory district.

This mass of drawers and cupboards occupy half the height of the store. Above them, the upper half of the back end of the wareroom is partitioned off by a brown-stained lattice-work that reaches up to the ceiling. Beyond the lattice is another world, undreamed of by the foreign trader. An observing ear may often hear the voices of Chinese women and the laughter of merry children; and a sharp eye may sometimes discover the flashing orbs of the secluded ones peering stealthily down upon the barbarian who has not the ingenuity to construct such fabrics as he comes to purchase from the Celestial.

He is a fortunate trader who so wins upon the confidence of a *hong-shang* Mandarin as to gain admission into his domestic circle behind the lattice; for all Celestials are jealous of their almond-eyed women as the bearded Sultan is of his harem.

After Lawrence had nearly finished purchasing his cargo of the famous silk merchant, Yung Cho, a novel occurrence took place that greatly disturbed the venerable old Mandarin. In the midst of the afternoon's trading, a small door in the lattice was suddenly thrown open, making a needless noise as if to attract attention. The face of a woman appeared in the aperture, and smiling down upon the sordid traders with easy familiarity, she called out in a pleasing voice to the merchant, speaking in pure English, —

"Good day, Yung Cho. Most noble gentleman, please don't forget your promise to invite the gallant American to dine with the family. Ha, mon cher, remember your promise!"

The flashing black eyes were withdrawn, and the lattice closed as quickly as it had been opened, eliciting a brief, characteristic reply from the proprietor of the Hong.

"Mi see. Mi see. Mellican mane he no likee come 'up-top side.' Too muche makee buy cargo. No can do!" And the impatient man waved his hand vehemently, as if to impress his squeaking utterance in Pigeon English.

Lawrence caught the hint at once, and eagerly sought to avail himself of the welcome invitation flung down so opportunely from above. "Yes, Yung Cho, you must certainly keep your promise to the ladies, if you are a man of honor."

"Mi see, Cap'in. Mi see some daye. Next v'y'ge, sposee you buy muche cargo of Yung Cho." And the cunning old tradesman chuckled over the thought of

thus securing an easy customer for a future cargo by the alluring bait which he dangled before him.

"Not so, noble friend. I haven't got through buying this cargo yet; and if you break your word with the ladies in this manner, I can't trust you in future. I'll go and trade with Se Ching. I think his Hong is not far away from here?" A Chinese merchant always has a rival in trade whom he hates with a good relish, and they spit at each other in imaginary combat like two fighting cats.

"Se Ching no can selle cargo likee Yung Cho. Sposee Mellican mane likee come up-top-side, muche goode. You makee buy goods, mi speake galee mi, you comee see chop sticks. Come, Cap'in, speake mi, buy more cargo."

Lawrence nodded, and again took out his memorandum, highly gratified at his unexpected success. Though he continued bargaining for a few more samples of goods, his mind was elsewhere. The fresh young face that had sparkled down upon him had greatly stimulated his curiosity to know more of the mysterious domicile above.

It spoiled his capacity for further trading, for the remarkable face seen haloed by the lattice door got continuously mixed with the satin stripes on pená silks and other fabrics.

It certainly was not a typical Chinese face that Lawrence had seen. Though her eyes were almond-shaped, yet they were not oblique. Her complexion was a rich rosy olive, and not the lusterless color of a true Celestial. After pondering upon the subject, he concluded that the

person he saw was a clear-skinned Spanish brunette, such as he had sometimes met on the Spanish Main, and is oftener seen at Manila and other ports in Luzon.

Finally, with undisguised impatience, Lawrence refused to do any more trading for the day; and expressed himself as being too hungry to drive a bargain. Yung Cho at once ordered the counter rolled back and locked, himself taking the keys, and then led the way up-topside, where the heart of his customer had long since preceded him.

From the plain, brown-stained walls of the warehouse, where paint never was used, Lawrence was ushered into a large airy drawing-room, hung with richly figured satin damask, and furnished with a degree of luxuriance rarely seen out of the Orient. The reception-room was at the back of the house, where the windows looked down upon a large garden, walled in by a twenty-foot wall, and abounding with semi-tropical fruits and rare flowers. The vines and trees were peopled with singing birds, their melody blending with the splash of fountains, and made more grateful by the ever-varying fragrance of the springtime blossoms.

Lawrence exclaimed in delight at the quaint beauty of the shrubs and plants, which were trained to grow in the form of birds, beasts, and many familiar things. This pleased Yung Cho, and he led his guest through one of the low-silled windows out upon the balcony; and then begged to be excused while he prepared for dinner. At the same time directing his guest where to find facilities for washing, adjusting his hair and beard, together with various enticing divans and lounging

chairs in which to repose after his toilsome day's trading.

Lawrence underwent a hasty ablution, and with his pocket comb "fixed things" for the state dinner with the celerity only acquired by a cosmopolitan. His brief toilet left him leisure to look around, and great was his surprise at the opulent display about him. This seemed all the more striking when contrasted with the severe primitiveness of the wareroom, where the money-making phraseology of the avaricious merchant betokened a life-long tussle with poverty. He would often exclaim when driving a bargain, —

"Ah! no can do. Mellican mane, he too muche money. Poore mane, mi. Come, Cap'in, you makee buy, then mi givee too muche cumsha. Poor mane, Yung Cho!" Yet after some of the closest bargains, the cumsha — a gift to close the trade — would often surprise the purchaser by its liberality.

Above stairs the regal furnishings of the house were so lavish as to exceed the limits of comfort or utility, and well might confound the frugal American when associating the sumptuous host of "up-top-side" with the penurious old trader of the silk shop.

At length Yung Cho appeared, and he had undergone as complete a metamorphose as his apartments. Black silk trousers, as before; but a blue satin biju, worked with gold thread and spangled with jewels, had displaced the untidy work-dress. His sallow face was shaved, touched with rouge, and his "pigtail" nicely re-braided, and lengthened with fresh colored silk.

The shopman, with his plain black overwear and

Pigeon English, was discarded; and the opulent Mandarin now conversed in good English about the interests of Nations, and the fluctuations of trans-Indian trade. Yung Cho deplored the steady encroachment of the Russian hordes — "miserable barbarians" — upon the China tea districts south of the Amoor. Per contra, he assumed it to be a dispensation from Confucius that the Golden Gate was made available to the poverty-stricken coolies of his over-populous Chung-Land.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE PIRATE QUEEN.

THE family did not make their appearance until dinner was announced. They then met the guest in the reception-room and were presented one by one. There were several purely Chinese ladies present; but the first to be presented was the queenly Spanish Senorita who had so charmed the Captain by the fresh brilliance of her beauty. Lady Osmanti was a large, fine-looking girl, a trifle imperious in manner, and who did not appear to have passed more than a score of pleasant summers.

Lawrence was invited to escort the grand Senorita. When all were paired off, they proceeded to the dining-room and seated themselves around a sumptuous board. Knives and forks were provided for the guest and his companion, while the other participants did graceful execution among the savory viands with the national chopsticks.

At first the Captain was all eyes and ears to observe everything going on about him. But he soon lost his identity in a growing interest in his lady friend, who soon proved herself remarkable for something more than her beauty. In spite of himself, Lawrence grew charmed with her grace and ease and elegance of manner, her sparkling wit and fluent conversation upon a great

variety of subjects. Though he was a man profoundly schooled in everything pertaining to the sea, even this versatile sailor soon found himself not only amused but instructed by the rare intelligence of this young Spanish prodigy.

Lady Osmanti was well traveled along every coast-line of the Orient, and had visited all the great cities of China, Japan, and India. Oceanic currents were as distinctly traced in the mind of this pedantic maiden as are meadow brooks to the milkmaids of other lands. The disputed source, direction, devious meanderings, and endings of the great Kuro Siwo — or black stream — was better known to this superb lady than to any other person Lawrence had met. She instructed him as to the cause of its emerald color, and tabulated its temperature at different seasons, from its source in the Indian Ocean to beyond the Aleutian Islands.

Though Lawrence was gifted as a chart-maker and writer on maritime matters, and took great interest in nautical affairs, yet here was a young woman scarcely out of her teens who could instruct him where he should have been most proficient. The more he tested and probed her pleasantly proffered knowledge of unfrequented isles of the sea, the more amazed and mystified he became; especially about the currents and coral reefs in the Banda and Sooloo seas, and about the then little known land of New Guinea, and its skull-gathering people.

Yung Cho's wife was a home-loving, motherly woman, looking after the comfort of every one about her. Her three grown-up daughters were among the most fashion-

able ladies of this great South-city of China. Two of them having the smallest possible feet that mortal could get about on; and charming finger nails from one to six inches in length.

The third and youngest girl had early imbibed radical notions. When the great Don Osmanti brought his young daughter from Manila on one of his trading expeditions with Yung Cho, little Arsi Yung Cho became greatly attached to the pretty Spanish maiden, and was permitted to let her feet grow, and to go back to Manila with the Osmantis, and attended school with her young friend at the fashionable convent of Luzon for nearly two years. A lifelong friendship sprang up between the families, as the result of this affection between the daughters.

After dinner the company were gathered in the drawing-room. There Arsi regaled the party with her deft handling of the guitar, while her two sisters busied themselves with their embroidery. Lady Osmanti soon after challenged Lawrence to a test of skill at chess. This he gladly accepted, as it was his favorite game on shipboard.

With the courtesy due a lady antagonist, Lawrence attempted to play his first game carelessly, and purposely sacrifice it to the sex of his opponent. But the imperious beauty would not permit a lax move to be made, and with flashing eyes requested her companion to withdraw the first move of his knight's pawn, in which he had unmasked his give-away intention.

With a merry peal of girlish laughter, she bade him look to his laurels, as she had played with the best

experts throughout India. The result was that Lady Osmanti won the first three games. She moved with great rapidity, a method which Lawrence was unused to, and in attempting to copy his opponent he lost the games. Not until he applied himself with close attention, and moved with great deliberation, did he succeed in winning the two following games.

Thus a lively interest was aroused among the young people, until the whole company gathered about the chess-board to watch which should win, — the aristocratic gold men, or the plebeian silver ones. Even the old mandarin now entered into the matter so thoroughly that he promised the much-prized chessmen to the winner, the best out of ten games. As Lawrence could stay to play but six games, the match could not then be decided. But, as the Captain had another day's trading to do, he gladly accepted an invitation to a further trial of skill with his accomplished opponent, so the renewal of the contest was assigned for the third day following.

Before leaving, Lawrence requested permission to ask one of the other captains to accompany him; to which Lady Osmanti objected at once. Adding that Yung Cho was very sensitive about foreigners entering his family circle, and nothing but her impertinent insistence, and the Captain's own shrewd appeal to the money-bags, had overcome his prejudice. But now that it was once accomplished, if no public talk was made of it, the favored guest would find it possible to invite himself whenever he chose, for the old merchant had expressed himself pleased with his new customer.

The curiosity of the young ladies had been greatly

aroused to see the hero of the great pirate fights, and they had daily watched him through the lattice chinks, importuning their father to invite him to dinner until the old merchant got out of patience with them; and none but herself had the courage to wage the battle to a successful conclusion.

When parting, Lady Osmanti begged the Captain, in her most gracious and bewitching manner, to forget that he had made a request which it was not possible to comply with. And, in turn, she craved a favor of him, which implied a flattering interest in his welfare.

"Señor Capitaine, promise your new-found friend that you will not expose yourself in the by-ways of Canton for a single instant. For those horrid pirates are as cunning as foxes, and revengeful as tigers, and would willingly risk their own lives to destroy yours. May the holy saints protect you, and bring you safely back to us, is the prayer of the Osmanti."

Yung Cho proposed to safely return his guest and valued customer to his hotel in the English limits of the city, and had ordered his double sedan which required four stout carriers. The sedan awaited him in the garden. Lawrence was placed on the front seat, as the merchant needed to sit where he could direct the carriers. The narrow streets not being designed for vehicles were often wholly occupied by pedestrians, among whom it would be difficult to pass but for their obsequious respect for a mandarin or a merchant.

When the carriers had settled into a dog trot on their way to the river precinct, and the ear had become used to their boisterous outcry to the populace, to break

ranks and make way for the great mandarin merchant, Lawrence found opportunity to look about him. Convenient to the dexter hand of both occupants were seen the polished handles of two pistols for each, holstered in the satin side-cushions of the sedan. While overhead, the scabbards of two double-edged short swords were crossed, presenting their hilts convenient for ready use by the occupants. The attention of the honored guest was drawn to the possible utility of the weapons, in a most piquant manner.

"Makee looke, Cap'in! Sposee one pirate mane likee kille you. He no can do!"

To exemplify his meaning, Yung Cho flashed out a two-edged sword and slashed it through first one window, then the other, at the imminent risk of stabbing some of the surging crowd. But the servile coolies only considered it an apt hint that the great man required more breathing room, and they dipped and ducked good-humoredly to avoid the murderous thrusts of this superior mortal.

They were not long passing out of the factory district of the ancient part of the city, which is defined by a dilapidated brick wall forty feet high, guarded by two cannons, mounted above the arched gateway, and trained to sweep the main thoroughfare. When near their destination, the sedan was suddenly obstructed and brought to a stop amidst a deal of uproar. Following Yung Cho's example, Lawrence drew a sword and waited an explanation.

The event proved harmless. One of the numerous stagings rigged across the street from house to house,

six stories above, had fallen, precipitating the wood-chopper and the wood belonging to the opposite families. The man was killed; but what seemed the greater affliction to all concerned, the wood-piles of the two families were irretrievably mixed. Material for wood-choppers was over plenty. But a year's wood that had been toted up six stories, when tumbled to the ground was a more serious matter.

The small matter of a dead man and a wood-pile could not be permitted to delay the sedan of an official. Hence a few lusty shouts of the four armed carriers, and the persuasive appearance of the mandarin's sword brandished from the window, easily cleared a way through the crowd, and the Captain was soon left safe at the door of his hotel.

The two following days were busy ones for Lawrence, shipping goods and settling up minor accounts. Merchandise is checked by the buyer at Canton, as it is sent aboard the lighters, and is afterwards checked by the merchant's clerk at Hong Kong, where it is settled for, after being fairly delivered to the ship.

On the third day, Lawrence sought Yung Cho at his shipping office by the river. He found the old merchant superintending the novel business of weighing great heaps of bullion in platform scales; as one of his old-time customers was paying in Mexican dollars, instead of bills of exchange, and the silver was rated at seven and a half per cent premium.

During their half-hour's ride to the factory district, Lawrence endeavored to glean something about the Spanish lady, but did not elicit much more than he

already knew. Yung Cho repeated the story of the school days at the convent. He had not seen much of her since then, as she traveled a great deal with her father, a great merchant at Manila, who was at one time held prisoner by the admiral of the pirate fleet. Don Osmanti was at length liberated, upon some terms not made quite clear to Lawrence.

When they arrived at the warehouse they entered by the side door, and proceeded at once to fill out the additional invoice of goods already agreed upon. It was notable that Yung Cho now dropped all his previous trade slang and sharp bargaining with Lawrence in private. Though his guest had witnessed plenty of the old trader's Jew-like whining talk, about hard times and poor man, in dealing with others. It was a relic of his long-gone youth, which he put on with his cheap, faded old sarong, when going to business; as he replaced the bright-colored terminal of his pigtail by the faded silk that had seen service for a decade.

The old merchant seemed never to forget that Lawrence had broken bread at his festive board, and had entered into his holy of holies, where sham and deception never came. The keen-eyed trader had also noticed that his customer was discreet, and had not bruited his exploit abroad among his companions. For this Yung Cho was ready to take him to his heart, and willing to trade without haggling for a greater price than he expected to get, which is the severest test of friendship that either a Jew or a Chinaman can be put to.

Arsi and Lady Osmanti were too impatient to wait the guest's appearance above, and came to greet him

from the lattice wicket with an accompaniment of bright eyes and glad smiles that expressed a flattering degree of pleasure at his coming.

When the trading was finished, the merchant cordially invited his guest to ascend to the dwelling and prepare for dinner. The family did not make their appearance until the gong announced the repast. Arsi and Lady Osmanti came in first, their pliant, willowy forms twined lovingly together with girlish exuberance of affection. Both girls expressed great delight at again meeting the guest.

They were prettily attired in low-neck dresses suitable for the warm spring day, displaying fair necks and bare arms. The headdresses of the Chinese women were something formidable and elaborate, while Lady Osmanti's toilet conformed to the English style at Hong Kong, and was much more becoming. Though her dress was plainly constructed, it was made of the richest fabric woven in India, with but few jewels or other ornaments, showing her fine form to the best advantage.

Lawrence took out Arsi to dinner, though the friends adroitly contrived to sandwich him between them. Thus he had another opportunity to enjoy the brilliant conversation of one, while he extended all due courtesy to the other. Though Arsi was a fluent talker in Spanish and French, she was a poor adept at what she termed the hideous jargon of English.

After dinner a walk was proposed in the garden, where were found every conceivable dwarfed shrub and tree grown in the mandarin gardens up the river above

Canton. Some of the fruit trees around the high walls were suffered to grow to full size, and bore delicious fruit. The conversation turned upon the virtues of the many medicinal plants found growing at the far end of the garden. Lawrence was a fairly competent physician; but he was surprised at the deeper researches of both of his girlish companions, as botanic medicine was a part of their education at the convent of Luzon.

"Senor Capitaine, tell us girls how you would cure that most difficult of all toothaches, that which cold water alleviates but never cures."

"That, Lady Osmanti, is a fit job for dental instruments."

"Oh, horrors! Spare us such a cruel infliction. What I describe is a purely nervous toothache brought on by a cold."

"Granted, but it is too severe to endure long, and no remedy reaches it."

"Fie, fie! I must instruct you better than that. One drop of oil from the red berry above your head will do it without fail."

"What, coffee oil? I stand corrected, fair lady."

"The same, senor. A strong decoction of the cured berry will sometimes answer."

"I am glad to learn it, for I am sometimes afflicted that way."

"Please don't demolish that poor Plantago major beneath your heel. I have a deal of affection for that humble plant with its one green martello tower."

"Why should you value that weed?"

"Because a strong tincture of it will cure the ache of

a hollow tooth, where the pain darts into the temple like the stab of a dagger."

"Indeed, and how would you apply it?"

"Take half a dozen drops internally. Then saturate any fibrous substance, and apply it to the hollow tooth. If the nerve is bare, it relieves instantly; if not, it may take an hour."

"Pray, where did you learn all this? I have never discovered it in my text-books."

"Ah, most noble senor, I am privileged to glean knowledge from the bee in the flower and the bird in the tree. However I acquired it, the remedies are infallible when they are indicated."

"Fair instructress! I present myself as a blank page, whereon you may record all the wisdom in a medical maiden's mind. Please proceed."

"Were it not that I detect a vein of irony in your fanciful linguism, I should like to discourse of the virtues of yonder jasmine vine. It is the finest febrifuge in medicine, when fairly indicated."

"There are few botanic remedies that I know so well as the yellow Jasmine," responded Lawrence. And for an hour the merry trio rambled about the garden, wisely discussing the remedial properties of the many simples found growing there. When, coming upon the old merchant directing his gardener, Yung Cho reminded his guests of the unfinished game of chess, which led to their ascending to the drawing-room, where they at once renewed the contest for the valuable prize of chessmen.

The final games became sharp, close conflicts, rather

more equally divided than the previous ones; yet Lady Osmanti came out ahead, and won the much-prized men, which were of great value. Yet this brilliant personage showed less interest in the games than she did about the duration of Lawrence's stay at Hong Kong, and the probable track his ship would take in beating down through the China Sea.

She wished to impress him with the necessity of favoring the western passage, and when well to the south, she strongly advised his making Pulo Condore, going to the eastward of the island; thence steering due south, sighting the Camel's Hump, passing through Gaspar Straits, and on to the North Watcher in the Straits of Sunda.

As it was Lawrence's first homeward passage through the dangerous sea, with its infinite number of sunken shoals and half-emerged coral islands, he was favorably impressed by the course laid out with such nice precision — the secret reason of which only dawned upon him at a later day.

It was now fully evident that the ardent Senorita was captivated with her new acquaintance. But this did not greatly surprise Lawrence, after the numerous ovations and feminine favors received at Hong Kong. And then a heart full to overflowing with fair Lucia Seymour could easily withstand the blandishments of the most brilliant of her sex. To one fresh from the refined atmosphere and innate piety and purity ever associated with Lady Lucia, the grand and beautiful Spanish maiden could not but seem a trifle too free and forward in manner; impressing the keen-eyed Lawrence with

her lack of womanly delicacy which was, perhaps, blunted by too free contact with the rough element of life at Manila, or, more properly, should be attributed to the national trait of her ardent, impulsive Spanish people.

Taken all in all, Lady Osmanti was one to embellish the most intelligent society. She was large-minded, and by keen observation had acquired extensive information, qualities not often found in full measure even among cultivated women. In some unaccountable way she had garnered an immense fund of such knowledge as the Earl of St. Clare and his gifted daughter sought during their years of travel.

Nevertheless, Lady Osmanti and Lady Lucia presented the most opposite characteristics of their sex, and only by their willowy-curves, tapering-flexions and billowy-swells, could their exquisite beauty touch hands in the least. But in these essentials it was impossible for their personal charms not to approximate, as the classic element of beauty is a central truth, an established law as fixed as the sunlight.

Had not Lawrence's heart been thoroughly pre-occupied before meeting the Senorita, he might easily have become enamored of this remarkable woman. For a man's heart is vagrant as a meadow brook. One fills its bosom with perfume from every succeeding flower along its bank; the other embarks his lighter loves with every fair maid he spies. But to return to the games, —

"Lady Osmanti, I congratulate you on winning six well-contested games. The superb chessmen are yours, thanks to Yung Cho's munificence."

"Truly, Capitaine, I wish the pretty baubles might

have fallen to your lot. I am sure you might have won them, had you played with greater deliberation at the beginning."

"They are a beautiful trophy, and I should be proud to have won them from so gifted a player as your Ladyship."

"Shall we never meet again, Senor Lawrence?" questioned the Senorita, while studiously replacing the chessmen from the margin to the center of the board. Her large magnificent eyes dwelling with a look of touching appeal upon her companion, and her subdued voice betraying a touch of sadness in its modulation.

"I hope so, most certainly, Lady Osmanti. I have enjoyed myself too much during these visits ever to forget them. Perhaps we may meet in England, where I shall reside after my present voyage is finished."

"Why in England? Do noble Americans often desert their beautiful country to amalgamate with those purse-proud islanders?"

"In what way has the British Lion offended your Ladyship?"

"What alien people have they not injured and affronted? Have they not enforced their baneful 'Opium Treaty' upon the downtrodden Chinese, at the cannon's mouth? Is there a baser national iniquity than the nefarious 'Salt Tax,' imposed upon their Indian possessions?" Her black eyes flashed, and her superb figure towered into a severe pose of dignity and disdain, while her whole expression became chiseled into a marbled emotion of scorn, sufficient to wither a nation.

Lawrence stood amazed at the sudden turn the con-

versation had taken. He found himself confronted by another manner of woman than what he had known. The suave, agreeable maiden of a moment since had been obliterated by a casual turn of thought. He hastened to palliate the storm of injured feeling he had innocently aroused, by a soft word said in extenuation.

"Having no such enmity to debar me, I have promised some English friends to make my home with them for the present. It would give me rare pleasure, Lady Osmanti, to meet you again, and I am sure you would meet a warm welcome at Moorland Castle."

"Thank you, Senor Capitaine! I have a feeling that we *shall* meet again; but I pray the Virgin Mother that it may not be upon English soil."

With this ominous riddle upon her tongue, and a tone of perceptible pique in her voice, the impetuous Senorita gave Lawrence her hand at parting, with the air of one grieved and disappointed at the futility of her endeavor — whatever that might be.

Kind farewell messages were exchanged with the family, for Lawrence's advent into their isolate lives had been a welcome jubilee to one and all. Witching little Arsi Cho was more outspoken in her thanks than her more timid sisters, who tottled about on their diminutive feet unsteadily as an urchin upon stilts.

The old merchant had been an aggrieved witness to the unhappy flash of temper shown by his lady guest, and, after the gentlemen were fairly embarked in the sedan on their way to the river, Yung Cho briefly explained that the East India Company had been the means of Don Osmanti's financial ruin and subsequent

death. Therefore his gifted daughter had abundant reasons to despise, not only the India Company, but the English government officials as well, for they participated in the cruel and arbitrary measures which the Spanish crown was too weak to resent.

CHAPTER XXII.

OLD TOM'S TRAGIC END.

THE bright April day had been a busy one for all connected with the Fleetwing. The last of the lighters from Canton had been unloading on both sides of the ship, the merchandise being received and stowed down in two hatchways at once. Lawrence had applied a spur to every one connected with his vessel since his last return from the great emporium of trade, impatient to be gone from port and on the homeward way to claim his Lucia. The Captain's health was fully restored, and no one now had much fear that the pirates would again attempt to assassinate a man found so hard to kill.

A month and a half had passed since the Seymours sailed for England, and nothing had yet been heard from the Greyhound. True, the weather had continued unusually rough. No vessel had come into port from Singapore, where Captain Royal intended to put in for a few days. But the strangest of all was that out of the five northbound ships which had come to Hong Kong, none should have sighted the Greyhound on their passage from Batavia and Straits of Sunda.

Though it had been a tiresome day for Lawrence, the night was so pleasant that he continued long upon the rampart, rehearsing his glowing life-plans to Dr. Greville, whom he now told for the first time about his betrothal

to Lady Seymour, and his happy future prospects in England. Ending finally by inviting the doctor to come over the water after they arrived home, and spend a few months at Moorland Castle; as their long voyage and its unusual perils had matured a strong attachment between them.

The Captain dropped into a pleasant revery, heedless of the lateness of the hour. Greville finished his fourth cigar and threw the stump into the bay, which led him to notice that the swift running tide was nearly flood, and admonished him that it was past one o'clock in the morning. He rose to go, and gave Lawrence a hint of the time of night.

Just then their attention was called to two dim, shadowy vessels, fanning slowly down past the pier, coming from the Ly-Moon before a light air and the last run of the flood. The largest fast-boat seemed to be in command, for some one on board of her was heard to order the smaller vessel to keep on and anchor abreast the cliff stair. While the large, clipper-looking craft sheered inshore, within hail of the jetty, and anchored just clear of the line of sampans.

From what could be seen in the starlight, this vessel was a long, low-setting, well-armed fast-boat; for the shadowy figures of many seamen could be seen flitting about her deck, and her rapid evolutions while coming to an anchor were executed with the precision that delights sailors of all nations.

"That's one of the three-masted smugglers, Captain," remarked Greville, following Lawrence's example by leaning against the eastern embrasure.

"Yes, doctor. But she don't mean to tarry long, you observe," replied Lawrence, startled from his glowing revery by this bold intruder in the offing. "I notice that she has payed out but a short scope of cable, considering the strong tide-way which she lies in. And then she keeps her big lateens aloft, like the wings of a timid bird half poised for flight."

"By the way, those are wonderfully handy sails; most useful to back and fill among such a snarl of vessels as this about us."

"Yes, indeed. They hang quietly in the wind's eye, and are as flat as a fore-and-aft sail; yet they can be set square by the yards as a topsail, when required."

"See there! some one on board of her is showing an ingenious signal light. Those 'pigtails' are an imitative people; a blue cross inside of a red circle. What a pretty device."

"Whoever sees that signal once should know it forever. Why, doctor, it really seems as if I had seen it before."

"I wish we were at an elevated position, so that we could see the reply signal, somewhere shoreward; probably back upon one of the hill streets."

"Perhaps it is a private telegraph to the harbor master, far up on the very top of the rocky hill. But no. On second thought I'm sure that the vessel's hull can't be seen from the houses beyond Queen Street, the cunning craft has caught the bottom so near in under the warehouses."

"By Jove, sir, then the smugglers are communicating with some one not far away from us in the water-line of

houses. See, they have lowered a boat and are coming ashore."

"Not at present, for they are dropping the boat astern. But this matter ought to be looked after by the water police. I'll express my opinion about this to the Admiral and the captain of the port, to-morrow."

"I certainly would, sir, for there is very lax discipline among the night police of the harbor. Do you know that I sometimes think there's a criminal collusion between the sea-rascals and the police of this place. Take the case of the attack upon your sedan, together with all the rumpus which your pistol-shots ought to have made; and not a policeman knew about it till we sent them word in the morning."

"I have had the same thought, doctor. But, criminal as it is, opium smuggling has been fostered so long by the East India Company that it has become a fixed part of their commercial policy, and all we can say won't change it. Well, doctor, I think it is bedtime for us. Call out Crawford, so that I can give him his orders."

"Here he comes now. It is long past his time to be called, and he has waked up and come out."

"Tom, my lad, keep your weather eye braced when that boat comes ashore. And report in the morning when the fast-boat weighs, and what direction she steers."

"Ay, ay, sir! I'll twig the snakish creetur, fur she looks 'nough like that ere king-pirate's fast-boat, what we uns fought in ther Fleetwing. I'se 'spicion she am eenamost enny thing bad yees mought call 'er." And

in five minutes more Tom was left alone in his night-guard on the rampart.

It was perhaps half an hour after the officers had gone to their rooms when the watchful guard caught sight of the brilliant reflection from a blue-light, which was cast out on the water in the direction of the fast-boat. The dazzling signal was similar to that which the Captain had previously seen displayed by the vessel nearly an hour before.

What most startled Tom was that the light was thrown from the immediate vicinity of the Drinker house, yet he could not detect its position from where he stood. A half-minute had not passed before a response was flashed back from the fast-boat, though it was extinguished in an instant, showing the utmost intent of secrecy.

Immediately after, a low-sounding boson's-call tinkled on the ear, answered by the tramp of feet on the vessel's deck. The boat seen towing astern was drawn quietly forward under the quarter ladder, and at least twenty armed men descended into her, followed more deliberately by a herculean officer.

The oars were not thrown in-end, after the usual method, a further display of secrecy; but, in answer to a low command, the bow was thrust out into the swirling tide, the muffled oars were shipped noiselessly, and the men pulled quietly in toward the shore, as if intending to land half a mile farther to westward.

But when once fairly out of the full strength of the ebb, which was now running in the direction of the Ly-Moon, the boat came silently winding her way through

the fleet of sampans, until nearly abreast of the bastion where old Tom stood, and, finally, by the aid of a few strokes, disappeared on the far side of the jetty.

Wary old Tom had noted every movement of the boat, and every sly dip of her oar-blades, whether he was pacing his lonely guard or leaning silently against the bastion. Yet there was no certainty but all this maneuvering was harmless, as Hong Kong was a free port, and was often only used as an intermediate port between the sea and the up-river trading stations. Thus, as long as no one intruded upon his section of the battlement, old Tom paced his night-watch, alert to repel any who sought to encroach upon his special precinct.

Presently the alert ear of the old seaman caught the low tones of a boatswain's whistle, which seemed to come from some of the shadowy crannies of the warehouse. Not seeing anything to attract attention, Tom began to think that it might be only an echo, resounding against the granite walls from some vessel in the offing. With a considerable degree of nervousness, he continued his tramp, whiffing vigorously away at the black stump of a pipe, which he had just replenished for a good, square smoke.

Soon after this occurrence, the armed boat again made her appearance, coming stealthily from beyond the jetty, dipping her oars lightly, to make headway against the young ebb; pulling or drifting in response to the low command of the officer, who steered the cutter so as to come around upon the tideward side of the bastion. Then a large boat-hook, in the hands of the bowman, was grappled to the embrasure, and the boat drawn

alongside of the sea-wall, fairly well sheltered from the tide.

While the bowman held the boat firmly by his boat-hook, the coxswain — a nimble young sailor, fair enough to be a girl — climbed up to the embrasure by the aid of the hook, where he was rudely confronted by Tom with one of his characteristic growls.

"Back ther'! yer durned young monkey, 'fore I toss yez inter ther drink, ez food fur ther sculpins." The sailor-boy slid back into the boat, surprised at his rough reception.

"Ashore there!" hailed the gruff-voiced officer astern.

"Hullo!" replied Tom.

"Is there no way of gettin' through the portcullis into town to-night?"

"Nary a way. It's on'y lifted at ther sunrise gun. Yez can pull half ar mile back ter east'ard an' find ar landin'; or mebbe ar mile down ter west'ard, at ther cliff stair, ez it likes yez best."

The officer hailed back in a more persuasive voice, —

"Say there, maty! can't you let us pass out through your section to Queen Street?"

"No passin' through 'ere till ther 'cullis am up, mister."

"Oh, come, now! be a good fellow for once."

"I sez ye'll hev ter bide yer time till mornin' gunfire," Crawford answered, with some loss of patience.

"But we can't wait, my good friend; and we'll stand treat with the best the place affords, if you'll oblige us."

"No thanks fur yer swash, mister. Yer couldn't pass fur ther best glass o' lollypop in ther land o' pigtails."

"*Caramba!* We'll come up and pass anyway. So be civil, you growling old bear."

"An it likes yez fur ar frolic, cum up an' try yer hand at it. I'll break ther head uv ev'ry muther's son of ye who seeks ter cross my beat ter-nite."

"We'll see about that. Go up, boys, and give him a try." And the foremost men began to mount up over the bowman and his boat-hook, but were checked by Tom's energetic action.

"Avast, there, yer boobies! or I'll slash yer pates ez I'd carve a piece o' salt hoss." And the brave old seaman whipped out his ponderous cutlass, with a vibrant ring that thrilled the night air with portent meaning. For Tom was expert with his weapon, having led the boarders on a man-of-war in his younger days.

Just then Tom caught the rustle of running footsteps on the granite behind him. He turned just in time to confront a big, broad-shouldered woman, who came rushing upon him with drawn sword, poised for a lunge into whosoever encountered it. As Tom turned upon her, she checked herself a minute, to take the measure of her foe. She was belted and plumed like a born warrior. Her girdle bristled with pistols, and showed a dagger's hilt brilliant with gems. Her boat-cloak was adroitly wrapped about her left arm, to serve as a shield; and, altogether, she looked very like one who contemplated fighting *à l'outrance.*

This was not the kind of foe superstitious old Tom cared to grapple with. But he was cunning at fencing and with the use of all arms, and he readily parried the free running thrust of his supple antagonist. Yet the

active old seaman soon found that he was kept busy saving himself from her artful passados and spiteful slashes; for, though she was a large, grand-looking woman, she was nimble of foot, and quick with her passes.

At first thought Tom had no idea that his assailant was connected with the boatmen. Who and what sort of a personage she was, the bewildered fellow could not conceive. But the longer he fought, the stronger grew his conviction that he was contending against a left-handed sister of Beelzebub, fresh from the lower world; for never a female mortal could handle a weapon like this false semblance of woman.

Dazed by such conclusions, Tom was heard muttering to himself, and growling at his invincible foe, having just escaped one of her piquant thrusts at his heart, following after a well-managed feint at his face, — artful enough for either devil or woman in the old man's estimation.

"Blue blazes! Missus, duz yer handle yer tool like o' thet? Why, mum, am yez ar leddy or ther devil, sort o' fixed up by yer tailor in smocks? Oh, ho! yez gettin' sort uv spiteful like wid yer durned weapon, pokin' yer skewer so's ter spile ar ole man's beauty. But, devil or 'oman, I'll hev ter make two halves uv yer carcass. So look ter yerself, mum, an' take ter ther work in 'arnest."

Having outlived his superstitious fears of his antagonist, the herculean fellow took to the offensive with the rush of a whirlwind, his ponderous sword slashes humming through the air like the whistle of bullets in

mortal combat. So hard pressed was his foe that the boatmen began to take a hand in the duel. Instantly a dozen navy pistols were leveled at old Tom, and he would have gone down riddled with bullets by the free-handed pirates, who climbed upon the shoulders of their shipmates to assist the weaker party, but the dauntless woman purposely kept between her huge combatant and the sanguinary boatmen, who continually interjected their calls between the sword slashes: —

"*Caramba!* Uncover the game, Capitana, till we pop 'im."

The grizzled old officer watched the encounter from the boat with the delight of a connoisseur, until he discovered that the queen had a tough fighter to deal with, when he became anxious for her safety, and so expressed himself, —

"Mucho bueno! Señora Capitana." Then changing to English, hoping to distract the attention of Tom, he continued: "Stand clear, lady Capitana, the chap is a rum one, and needs boring. Move aport a bit! '*Aquila non capit muscas!*' — eagles don't catch flies. Stand aside, buena Señora."

But Aloata — for it was indeed the pirate queen — showed more prudence than her men, and forbade their shooting, saying, —

"Nay, nay, my merry men, not a shot until I call for it; and when did Aloata of Gular ever call for your aid in single combat? 'Twould rouse the game we came to hunt, and spoil my frolic with this giant baby."

The queen's nonchalance imparted confidence to her men, and disabused their minds of the impression that

she was being too hard pressed by the colossus. This led them to lower their cocked pistols, which had endangered friend as well as foe. While the euphemistic appellation of "baby," coming from a dashing young woman, had the effect to greatly enrage old Tom.

Crawford's indignation soon got the better of his discretion and coolness, for it led him to overreach the limits of careful guard.

He lunged away with his huge cutlass furiously — too far to recall with such a heavy blade — and the next instant the adroit swordswoman disarmed him, and his huge cutlass went flying over the rampart into the sea, startling the midnight fishes with the glint of its blade.

Springing aside to avoid Aloata's swift home thrust which followed, the sinewy old seaman snatched a pistol from his belt, cocked and presented it to the queen's breast; but before it could be fired he received a terrible under-cut on the wrist, which sent the weapon whizzing over his head. This saved the queen's life, and suppressed the report of the pistol, of which she stood most in dread.

Amazed at such swordsmanship, and enraged by this second mishap, Tom unbelted another pistol in an instant. But before he could bring his weapon into use, the agile queen sprang at him, made a swift lunge, and ran him through the body, — leaving the jewel-hilted sword on the breast of the brave old seaman, who fell upon the rampart with a noisy clang, which informed all ears within hearing that the queen's blow was sent home, and need not be repeated.

Cool and cautious to the last, Aloata sprang to the embrasure with the leap of a tigress, for the blood-thirsty men were now clambering up like a swarm of infuriated demons.

"Back, back to your boat! Every man to his thwart, and make ready for a sudden spring. We may have roused the game we hunt, and have need to use ready oars to escape." And the wolfish pirates readily obeyed their dominant-minded leader.

Calling up one whom she named Scotia, Aloata bid him quickly put on the coat and hat of the fallen guard, and tramp away on his guard-beat across the bastion. She then hid herself in the shadow of the embrasure, in fear some one of the many sleepers might have been aroused by the rattle of steel when Tom fell on the granite battlement.

Scotia's bulky form was large enough to represent Tom. The false guard had not tramped three steps over the stony walk before several windows were flung up in the numerous chambers, disclosing sleepy heads thrust out to learn what the noisy rumpus was about. Seeing the burly figure of the supposed guard pacing leisurely across the bastion, all but one of the disturbed captains withdrew their heads, and returned to their slumbers, attributing the supposed noise to a nightmare dream. The one sleeper who lingered at the window remained, not to watch, but to fill his pipe and indulge in a much-needed smoke.

When at length all became quiet, and the retired smoker was thought to be asleep, Aloata stole out from the shadow of the buttress wall, and knelt by old Tom's

prostrate form. Freeing the brave man's breast from her rapier, Aloata stooped to stanch his wound as best she could. Finding that her sword had passed near the apex of Crawford's heart, and that his wound was fatal, the queen became saddened with real grief to think that she had destroyed such a valiant friend of the man she loved.

Procuring a flask of spirit from one of the boatmen, the queen administered a draught to her prostrate foe, kindly questioned the dying seaman about his suffering, and asked what she could do to relieve him. Searching for his pulse, she found that it had already ceased beating at the wrist, which was cold and damp; and even his temporal pulsation had almost ceased.

The old sailor partly aroused, enough to recognize the person who was bending over him, and, with the awe-inspiring prescience of one lingering on the brink of another world, he began to plead for the welfare of his much loved Captain; whom he had watched to grow up from youth to manhood — from cabin-boy to captain — and whom he now loved better than all else in life. While yet his aged eyes were becoming glazed with the film of death, and his inarticulate words were made moist with the life-blood oozing from his lips, dear old Tom made his last plea for his commander, —

"I sez, Belzy! am this you?" And the dying man struggled hard to put his pulseless hand upon the almost human face bending kindly over him, but his strength was not equal to the task.

"What is it, my good man? I am the person who has killed you; and I hate myself for the cruel act."

And the queen's hot tears fell fast upon the cold, damp face of the wounded seaman, carrying conviction of his now being in friendly hands.

"But it wuz ar — fair fight, mum, — an' yez — proved — ther best — feller. Now — good Belzy, promis' — not — ter harm — my — Cap'n. It's ther — dyin' — wish — uv ar — ole — water-dog — what loves — 'im!"

"Yes, you brave fellow, I do promise. I will vouch my very soul that he shall not be harmed," she replied, almost choked with weeping.

"All right — leddy Devil. Now — moor — me ole hulk — 'long — side uv — mammy Craw — ford. Ef she's — anchored — in — yer watch — down b'low — ther. An', Belzy, — 'member — my — Cap'n — who — "

And trusty old Tom Crawford fell dead, with his cold face upon the cold granite; which was now flooded with the life-blood of one of Nantucket's noblest seamen. A man thoroughly fearless when battling with wild winds and rough weather; or in encounters with demon whales, murderous pirates, and frenzied sailors when maddened with drink. But whose superstitious fears — even in death — made him a thorough convert to the belief that Satan presides over the affairs of men. For noble old Tom had found sixty years of sea life too full of evil things and murderous propensities to deem it possible that divine goodness rules over the mundane doings of men — ashore or afloat.

CHAPTER XXIII.

CAPTAIN LAWRENCE'S ABDUCTION.

SOMETHING more than half an hour was suffered to pass after Tom's death, before the queen would allow any further move to forward the enterprise she came to execute. Then the boat-ladder was ordered up, and Scotia, who still kept up his mock guard, was told to secure it firmly to the embrasure.

Aloata was the first to climb up the escarpment. When all but the boat-keeper had followed, and ranged themselves in the shadow of the granite wall, the queen imparted her instructions to the officer in charge, — the same in command on a previous expedition, — directing him to guard every inlet and outlet of the section, and be prepared to resist every intrusion with a strong hand.

Beckoning to Pulin — the sprightly little coxswain — the queen approached Lawrence's apartments, keeping cautiously in the shadow of the section wall; while the officer quietly stationed his men about the precinct. The door of the Captain's chamber was found locked. Though the two windows were open, they were much too high to be reached without climbing.

Aloata had made previous forecast for this difficulty, and now made provision for meeting it on the instant. Motioning for Pulin to put down her box of flowers, the

queen stationed herself under the window nearest the door, and adroitly placed her hands in the requisite position for the sprightly sailor-boy to step nimbly up from one dainty hand to the other; thence to the royal shoulder, and on to the window seat above. The small moccasoned feet of the girlish-looking lad tripped up this novel stairway noiseless as the travel of a bee among flowers, showing such complete indifference to the royal material of the stair as never a nautical masculine could acquire.

When fairly perched upon the window sill, Pulin took time to listen with intense eagerness for the breathing of the sleeper. Satisfied that the Captain's respiration was natural, the lad made sign to the queen, cautiously dropped over into the chamber and disappeared. The door was quietly opened from within, and the youth came tripping out for further instructions.

Aloata opened the box containing the flowers, which now filled the night air with intense perfume, and bade the boy take them and hasten on his mission. Knowing what was required, the lad stole back into the chamber and groped his way through the darkness to the bedside, leaving a track of exquisite aroma behind him, honeyed as the wing-breeze of a hundred home-flying bees.

For a time silence reigned within. It was a period of intense apprehension for Aloata, judging from her rapid breathing and restless action, together with the defensive attitude she occasionally assumed — though the latter was perhaps an unconscious habit of one inured to the use of weapons. From whatever cause, the queen was constantly freeing her rapier and half drawing it

from the scabbard — still wet with the blood of old Tom — and at times she handled her dagger or pistols, bringing them well to the front for ready use.

So restless became the agitation of the queen as the delay of minutes seemed lengthened into hours, that her countenance would have been a study, her emotions were so conflicting. Though her face could not be seen in the starlight, the forward curve of her figure expressed volumes, as her sinuous body assumed the pose of a listening hunter, hearkening for the spent breath of the deer.

At length Pulin appeared at the door, and hastened to the queen, uttering the one word "Bueno!" in an excited, girlish voice; and further indicated that the captain was stupefied, by covering both eyes with his hands. Waving her hand in the direction of the boat, Aloata sent the boy to bring forward the several men previously agreed upon. With the leap of a fawn, the youth ran to the bastion and soon returned, followed by Scotia, Hootie, and Antonio: all trusted men among the pirate crew.

The queen led the way into the chamber, followed by the under officer and the two seamen. Scotia produced a dark lantern, and flashed its bull's-eye about the room, until its glare struck the bed and disclosed where the sleeping victim lay, drugged by the toxic effect of the flowers. Touching the two stout seamen on the shoulder with her rapier, she bid them clothe the captain; and further admonished them that they harmed the prisoner at their peril.

The two did the work quickly, and for further security,

should he rally from the stupor, he was rolled up in a pair of blankets, and corded like a bale of goods. During this time Pulin, the pseudo-masculine youth, had packed Lawrence's trunk and secured his overcoats, found in the camphor-wood wardrobe near the door.

When all were ready, the procession started for the boat; the trunk, the overcoats, and the bundled man; Aloata bringing up the rear, her heart beating wildly at the success of her bold exploit. Soon as the drugged man and his clothing were fairly stowed in the stern-sheets, Aloata blew a low whistle with her silver call, imitating the cry of a distant gull. The men soon appeared from every section of the rampart, and descended to their places.

Then Pulin unfastened and threw down the ladder, and slid into the boat by the aid of the boat-hook. Thrusting out from the sea-wall, the oars were got into position, and the cutter was soon pulled alongside the fast-boat in the offing. The boat was soon hoisted, the human freight transported to the cabin, and the cunning abduction of Captain Lawrence was accomplished.

While the "Arsi" was getting under-way, a signal was made to the companion fast-boat to take her anchor and be off, going by the western passage, not to attract too much attention by both vessels going in one direction.

The tide had changed since the Arsi came to anchor, and was now running swiftly, trailing the vessel to the eastward with the morning ebb. The wind was fair enough to allow free sheets down through the Ly-Moon and out to sea. It was but a few minutes' work of the

capstan to trip the anchor, which was quickly catted and taken to the bow.

The three huge lateens were trimmed to the breeze, and the long, sharp vessel was brought as near to her course as the numerous junks and merchantmen would allow; skimming over the starlit bay fleet as a bird. Though there were one hundred and twenty seamen employed while taking the anchor, hoisting the boat, and trimming the sails, as soon as the vessel was a-weigh, and the one hundred sweeps laid handy for use, all but forty coolie seamen were sent below, lest attention should be attracted to their warlike character.

Bending gracefully from her course to avoid the intervening vessels, the Arsi threaded her way directly through the fleet of men-of-war; as it would require great loss of time to tack and avoid them. Whether purposely or not, Aloata fearlessly sailed her craft near enough to throw a biscuit on board the Admiral's line-of-battle ship; showing that a woman's tact, coolness, and unquailing courage are not inferior to the bravest of the sterner sex.

As the piratical fast-boat passed close under the stern of the Invincible, the quartermaster looked lazily down upon the deck of the apparent smuggler, and hailed, —

"What vessel's that! and where are you bound?"

A ready answer was flung contemptuously back to the officer by Aloata, who sat indolently leaning over the taffrail, —

"No intende, Señor!" — "Don't understand, sir."

"Why don't you have somebody who can understand?" angrily retorted the baffled Englishman.

"No intende!" was the provoking response, and the Arsi passed swiftly on without further molestation.

The moment the fast-boat had rounded North Head, and the shipping was shut out from view, the boatswain's whistle was heard. The whole crew was mustered, and the hundred long ashen sweeps were brought into play. This so increased the speed of the pirate craft that the snakish thing writhed and trembled from stem to stern, and she shot through the narrow Ly-Moon pass like an arrow.

When the vessel approached the Waglan passage, the wind freshened and backed round still more to the south-west, with the trend of the tide. This greatly increased her paces, and soon carried her out past the Ninepin rocks. Then the seas became too large to use the sweeps, and they were shipped in and stowed away, while the vessel was kept off southeast, carrying a beam-wind, and running merrily down the China Sea, glad as an imprisoned bird set free.

It was perhaps two hours after passing the Waglan Islands, during the mid-forenoon, while the vessel was running free under a press of sail, and beyond all likelihood of pursuit, that Captain Lawrence first awoke to partial consciousness, wondering where he was.

The bewildered man aroused sufficiently to perceive that he was abed in a lady's apartment, judging from the feminine apparel suspended about the chamber; but where it was and how he came there, greatly confused him. The gentle swaying to and fro of the strange habitation he was in, had the pleasing effect to lull him back into slumber, like the rock-a-by motion of a cradle;

though it dizzied his brain, and seemed like being ballooned in the air, or suspended in a dream.

As he recovered a trifle more sensibility, his attention was called to the frequent rapid careening of the bed, when the strong wind-puffs overfilled the sails and bowed the vessel to her bearings; ever followed by a sudden weather lurch, as the fast-boat recovered her equipoise. A sailor cannot be mistaken about this never-to-be-forgotten ship-motion. Instantly the half-dazed seaman knew that he was afloat, and readily believed that something had happened to him and that the Fleetwing had cleared from port, and was on her homeward way.

After another short sleep, Lawrence again made a desperate effort to arouse from his lethargic condition, and succeeded in changing his position so that he could look into the room beyond. The main cabin was finished in the plain unvarnished wood of all junks and fast-boats, though the cedar paneling of the Arsi was nicer than usual.

Here was evidence of his being aboard another craft than the Fleetwing, and Lawrence was made so dizzy by the discovery that his sight wholly left him for a time. He lay racking his brain to learn what had happened. A dim remembrance of seeing the fast-boats before he retired to his room was the most that his blurred memory could recall. When that was — a week or a day past — he could not determine.

At length he became convinced that he was not only at sea, for he could now distinguish the swash of the seas against the vessel's side, but that he was a prisoner; and had probably been knocked down and kidnapped,

for his brain now reeled and ached as upon the previous occasion, when he was wounded at the cliff stair. This conviction was not pleasant to contemplate, and he again swooned and lay in complete unconsciousness.

Hours after he was waked by a woman's voice at his bedside. She seemed to be overseeing some work in the cabin. By what Lawrence could learn, the panel work was being changed. When his sight returned, he discovered that the plain finished wood had been turned to the wall, giving place to rich upholstering, cushioned with satin and gold-embroidered damask; an ingenious device, by which the plain cabin was transformed into a luxurious boudoir.

Even the camphor-wood ceiling had been metamorphosed into rare legendary paintings of Oriental scenes, and the stateroom doors were changed from wood panels into heavy plate mirrors; each door being made of two thicknesses, and so hinged as to turn inside out at pleasure. These changes in Lawrence's surroundings had taken place since he swooned, which led him to discredit his own vision and think he was undergoing some wild, fantastic delusion.

The desperate effort he had made to master the above information overtaxed him greatly, and he could keep his eyes open no longer. Overcome by renewed languor, he lay in a semi-conscious trance, throbbing from head to foot with a pleasurable, sensuous motion, as if swaying upon perfumed billows of air.

Though his eyes had refused further use for the present, his hearing had become abnormal, and now proffered him more abundant information than he could

have derived from visual impressions. He sometimes heard the workmen call their mistress Aloata, noble Queen, Señora Capitana, and such names as soon led him to believe that he had been abducted by the pirate queen.

With few exceptions, the cabin was now transformed into a pretty bijou of a place when one of the Scottish workmen asked, —

"What next, Captain Aloata?"

"Change the paneling of the starboard stateroom, Hootie, which is for your new captain. And work quick, all of you, for the American will soon rally."

"Ay, ay! noble queen. But we wants no new cap'n. The Arsi sails best wid you in command, if you will on'y lay out some work for your merry men."

"All in good time, Hootie."

"Is it true, leddy cap'n, that you've come to like the Yankee who killed the great Admiral?"

"Yes, good Hootie. He's a noble man. This Capitaine did not kill Ching Along, but was himself struck down by the last sword-cut of the king. Mind that you impress this upon the crew."

"But, my queen, the leaders for'ard are mad and mutinous about this, and swear you have made this story to suit the case."

"Well, Hootie, you, Scotia, Antonio, and all others of my trusty men must stand by the truth of the matter, or you are no true subjects of mine."

"We'll do our best. But, with all the culling of men by the officers, there's many a black sheep among the crew of the Arsi. Yet it's worse at Pulo Gular, for the

mutinous scoundrels at the Point settlement are brewing trouble for us all."

"I'm glad you've told me this much, Hootie. They think that none but the great Admiral can keep them in check. But, if need be, Aloata can weed them out, and make a short shift of such scum at the yard-arm. Keep me informed about this mutinous feeling here aboard, and at Gular."

"Ay, ay, leddy captain. We'll watch and we'll wag our tongue for the right on't, though it will be at the risk of our lives. Never another man can do the rough work among the point scum like Admiral Ching Along. No disrespect to the leftenant, his brother, nor the bravest of our brave ones, Captains Morella, Puling, and Koxinga. — This stateroom is fixed in the fancy. What next, noble queen?"

"Nothing more now, good Hootie. We'll wait till the noble Capitaine revives before changing my room. Then I will show my merry men the handiest fighting man in all the Hwa Kwoh — the flowery kingdom." And Aloata's eyes flashed with admiration of the brave deeds accomplished by the man she loved; adding, "The same hero whom my honest gentlemen knocked down in the sedan, at the cliff stair; and who rallied and shot six of my cowardly flunkies, and dispersed four more, that escaped scot-free to tell the tale to their shipmates."

"Ah, leddy cap'n," chimed in Scotia, who was overseeing the workmen. "An' mysel' was one o' ther four 'flunkies' what run like ar Derby racer. An' likey o' not I scampered faster nor the rest on um; seein'

as how Scotia boarded ther boat fust 'flunky' uv all."

"Why did the bravest man on the Arsi run? I never knew that you would turn back to the foe, Scotia."

"Well, my queen, it was Scotia who clubbed the rum un in the sedan. An', may it please yer, I've a trick uv whackin' twa licks inter one, sumtime. An', sure ez yer live, thet's ther whack Scotia placed softly on ther pate uv ther Yankee. An' I tho't 'im dead, clean gone, for he luked white ez ther sea-cap on ar storm biller." And Scotia lowered his voice into a sepulchral whisper, while making furtive glances at the sleeping captain.

"Think o' thet! noble queen. Then ter seen ther dead un resurrect, an' shoot twa stout carriers wid one pop o' ther shooter, made ar mon ruther onsartin 'bout ther honesty uv ther creeter. Wus than a' that, for arter we'd rallied an' slashed the dead un inter mince meat wid our cutlasses, dinna ther ghost uv ther mon turn aboot an' pop four on us dead, in twa ticks uv ar timer." And the burly old Scotchman quaked with apprehension, lest the unconscious Lawrence should see fit to exhibit more of his supernatural ability.

"O fie, Scotia! Ghosts don't shoot bullets that kill."

"Bless yer sole, Cap'n Aloata, give Scotia suthin' ter fought what'll stay dead when he's killed, an yez likes not ter seen yer best fighter turn starn to ther foe."

"Well, go now, good Scotia. Send your men forward and report to me what's going on among the crew."

Jerking vigorously at their forelocks, the officer and his helpers backed out of the cabin by a succession of stern-boards, one and all apprehensive of the supernatural powers of the captive.

Aloata was left with something serious to contemplate, if the half of her two thousand or more villains, both at Gular and aboard of the cruisers, were bent upon killing this man upon whom she had centered her dearest hopes of happiness. She turned to look at the captive who was like to cost her so dear. His eyes were closed in restful sleep, and his cheeks, which had been ghostly pale, were now flushed with the hue of health, showing that he was fast rallying.

The sadly perplexed queen bent dotingly over the manly face which she had learned to love so well. With the fond solicitude that only an impassioned woman can disclose, she brushed the wind-blown hair from his forehead and tenderly smoothed the short brown ringlets on his head; dreaming dreams too enchanting to be uttered, yet all unconsciously betraying her inmost thoughts, —

"Oh, noble man! If I can but induce you to love me, you shall not long be kept in captivity, nor be subjected to danger from my mutinous freebooters. Love me, Capitaine, and I will set you at liberty on the instant. We will load my fleetest vessels with wealth sufficient to buy a kingdom; go whither you will, and make us a home, bright, beautiful, and pure enough to become a saint's rest.

"Farewell then to my Isle of Roses — my flowery kingdom of Gular — though nothing on earth can be half so fair. Then, dear Capitaine, your Aloata would

fill your noble heart with a surfeit of love and happiness, until you would forget your English peeress whose delicious enchantment has hedged you about with the witchery of a Peri.

"O Santa Maria! could this heartfelt wish but be accomplished for your wayward child, then swift retribution for the untold wrongs to the Osmanti might be left to the tardy justice of the gods. Neither British greed nor British goading should ever tempt me to again wallow in the fierce passions of revenge."

Thus the proud woman doted over her much loved captive, and moaned about the weight of wrongs imposed upon her Spanish kindred by an alien nation of wrongdoers, for which she had nurtured revenge so dire that her woman's hand had become a hand of devastation and death, dealing destruction too bountifully.

Administering a stimulant to help arouse the sleeper from his profound lethargy, the enamored queen darkened the room and went up on deck, becoming impatient for the kidnapped man to rally, yet somewhat dreading his first outburst of indignation when he learned of his captivity.

The day was bright and warm. The southwest monsoon was blowing strong and steady and had taken the Arsi well past the much dreaded Pratas Shoal. The fleet vessel was speeding southward on her way to Pulo Gular, the mysterious pirate isle that had baffled the naval fleet of England for many a year. Many secret expeditions had also been sent in search of this El Dorado, where hoards of uncounted millions were reputed to be stored. But thus far the English had not discov-

ered its location, though it was believed that the Spanish government of Luzon, which pandered to the predatory power that spared their ships and destroyed their rivals, could have greatly enlightened the world in this matter.

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE QUEEN'S CONFESSION.

WHEN the queen went below, early in the twilight hour, she found her captive had arisen, and was now reclining at his ease in the quiet seclusion of the after cabin. He awoke refreshed, rose and made his toilet, and started to go on deck. But the effort proved too great, his brain began to reel, darkness invaded his sight, and, finding that he should fall if he persisted, he groped his way back to the luxurious divan built into the lunar curve of the transom; where the cool breeze from the stern windows soon restored him.

He had scarcely rallied and become clear-headed again, before the pirate captain made her appearance. Lawrence was struck dumb with wonder when he recognized in the much dreaded pirate queen the beautiful Lady Osmanti whom he had admired and esteemed at Canton. By no effort of his imagination could he at first believe that the two could be one and the same person.

Aloata witnessed the sad perplexity of her captive, and, though she shrank from disclosing her true character to this man, yet she was too fearless and self-possessed to delay the confirmation of her identity for an instant. She stepped eagerly forward to greet him, caught up the hand lying languidly across his chest, and inquired with adroit attempt at courtesy, —

"Señor Capitaine, how do you find yourself? Let me hope that you are none the worse for what has transpired."

Lawrence yielded his hand passively, showing neither consent nor reluctance by the concession. With gracious condescension of manner, Aloata seated herself by his side, and calmly awaited his response. Gray eyes and black orbs then met in sharp, severe interchange of questionings, as never keen-eyed mortals clashed scintillant glances before, each endeavoring to unriddle the inmost thoughts of the other.

While the justly indignant man discovered that this once admired woman was his abductor, he felt assured that she had captured him neither for the purpose of revenge nor murder; for the arrogant young creature still disclosed an overpowering tenderness for him. Yet, lurking somewhere in the middle distance, he caught glimpses of a well-defined perspective of sorrow and shame because of this senseless act which she had perpetrated. For, by so doing, she saw that she had plucked herself down from the high empyrean wherein this loved man had enthroned her.

With equal sagacity, the wise-eyed woman discovered that her loved captive was judging her with mingled pity and scorn, showing the usual masculine contempt for the senseless feminine thought which had been her ruling motive, — a belief that with opportunity she could enforce an adequate return of her passionate love.

Like the clash of keen rapiers were the intromitted glances of these two intelligent questioners: the one

piercing home with the irrefutable fact of criminality; while the other parried every spiteful home thrust of her loved companion with the cool nonchalance of a born fencer.

Lawrence's indignant looks glanced from off Aloata's adamantine armor, harmless to offend, and pointless to penetrate. But the man's scrutiny of pity and compassion pierced home to the woman's loving heart, and from her inmost citadel arose a cry of submission and shame. This impelled Aloata to force the conflict to a swift conclusion, pro or con.

"Capitaine, you forget that I have inquired how you are." The slight touch of hauteur which crept into the suppliant tones of her voice served to recall Lawrence's indignation, and he answered with look and tone of severity, —

"Madam, I am as you behold me. A man who has been knocked down and torn from his lodgings cannot be expected to tell just how he is. Only that he is justly indignant at the dastardly wrong inflicted upon him in a surreptitious manner."

"You are wrong, noble Señor, in supposing that you have been beaten or handled otherwise than tenderly while under my own supervision."

"Why, then, has a day or more gone past, leaving me physically weak and mentally confused?"

"You have only been drugged, Señor, by the aromatic odor of a simple flower, means not capable of permanent harm to any one."

"As I was handled roughly and beaten upon a previous occasion, — and as I now believe by order of the

same authority, — why should I deem that I have now been differently dealt with?"

Aloata colored with shame. Her previous sin had found her out, and lowered her in the estimation of the man whom she most prized. But she determined that there should be no more concealment between them. He should learn that she was not so bad as she seemed.

"You are right, Señor Lawrence, about the previous affair, which is now a subject of the deepest regret to me. I pray you hear my statement before you further question my motives. At the time to which you allude there were more than three hundred savage men lurking in the precincts of Hong Kong, seeking to murder you. Supposing you to have killed my husband, Admiral Ching Along, I arrived at Hong Kong that evening rather as a participant than a protector.

"You were witness to my arrival, for it was done openly and fearlessly, while you sat on the balcony at the Ladrone Palace. You were pointed out to me by one who knew you. Immediately my weapons were loaded to revenge my husband's death. With that intent I found my way into the plane tree at the west end of the balcony, secured a position which overlooked you and Lady Seymour, whom you were then in the act of wooing. You owe your life to that scene.

"Tender memories were touched by what I witnessed, — as the melodies of long forgotten songs come back to us from childhood, — and, though I repeatedly covered you with my unerring aim, yet I could not fire, and only the saints in heaven know why. I was determined that you should die, yet I delayed your execution to behold

the farce of two lovers wooing, for I had discovered that it was no common love-making, but a scene so holy and pure that death to one or both of the participants might be made most poignant to the slayer of my king.

"I had heard flattering things of your bravery, and I witnessed your manliness. In your interview with the Earl's daughter, I caught glimpses of a character more grand and noble than I had conceived of, and my woman's heart was more deeply touched than I knew. I said I would delay your death, and know more of you. And I then climbed down, and set my own body-guard to save you from the knives of the hungry assassins everywhere ambushed to slay you that night. It ended with ordering you to my own vessel in the offing.

"You know the sequel of that morning's work as regards yourself. You were knocked down and supposed to be stunned; rallying, your skillful use of weapons seemed so supernatural to my men, under the circumstances, that you slew half of my gig's crew, and put the rest to flight from superstitious fears.

"Because of that deed of heroism, — all unknown to yourself, — you were ever after guarded by my most trusty men, over whom I frequently presided in person; for you were hunted by the most bloodthirsty villains of our fleet, and to escape by any ordinary precautions of your own was impossible. Let me hope that I now stand better in your estimation for the explanation I have given."

"Who are you, my lady? And why is one so superior in intelligence and breeding found banded with the veriest scum of the earth?"

"I am Aloata Arsi Osmanti, granddaughter of the great duke of that name in Spain. We are descendants of Ferdinand and Isabella. My father, Ferdinand Osmanti, was a wealthy Spanish Don, the head of the great house which for five generations bore that name at Manila. There were branch houses at Canton, Acapulco, Singapore, and Bombay; and at one time his business belted the world with its ships.

"During my girlhood, Don Osmanti lost largely by speculation, and at one time was severely used by the English East India Company, which imbittered the Don's whole after life. At length the English seized him, tried and condemned him for complicity with pirates, ending by transporting him to Norfolk Island, where the noble old man died, killed with grief."

As the young queen paused over the sad memories awakened, and pressed her throbbing forehead, so carried out of herself when contemplating the fall of her great house, Lawrence took occasion to push forward his other inquiries.

"But to my second question, Señora. Why are you found banded with freebooters?"

"Señor, forgive my wandering thoughts, for this is a sad introspection for me. Years before Don Osmanti's death, our whole family were taken prisoners by the pirate ship of Admiral Ching Along. We were sailing down the Macassar Strait, bound to Bombay with one of the richest ventures ever shipped by my father; Señora Osmanti, my father, and myself, together with several lady companions, Spanish and Chinese, and our servants. We were all confined in the forward cabin and taken to the pirate stronghold at Pulo Gular.

"We were not killed, as were others of the crew, because my mother was Chinese. She was the daughter of a great mandarin of Canton, and sister of Yung Cho, of whom you bought your cargo. The pirate king took charge of our ship, the Acapulco, with a part of his own crew. Though most of our crew had previously belonged to his, having been purposely shipped at Manila by his connivance for the purpose of subsequent capture.

"In his interview with Don Osmanti, Ching Along compelled my father to impart to him the full history of the cargo, and all of his arrangements for disposing of it in Bombay. Father was made to sign papers so that Ching Along himself could reap the whole benefit of sales. As it would be some months before returns would be made for the cargo, our family was taken to Pulo Gular and held as hostage of good faith.

"O Señor! there came sad days for me. My darling mother died from shock and grief, though the Isle of Roses is the most beautiful spot in the world; but the beautiful Señora had been frail for years. The great admiral became enamored of me, then only sixteen, and just from the Luzonia convent; and he made overtures to the Don for my hand, which were indignantly repelled.

"Thus we were held in bondage for a year, until I learned to respect the great admiral for his bravery in battle and his invariable kindness to us. And even Don Osmanti came to sympathize with Ching Along's war of retaliation against the hated English, when he learned how barbarously they had used the noble mandarin, who was a relative of Governor Lin, and had once been an honest merchant of Canton.

"Tiring of the restraint put upon us, and longing for freedom to voyage over the Indies, I at length yielded to the importunities of the pirate king. Of my own free will we were married, and I was proclaimed queen of Gular. Then Ching Along offered Don Osmanti his freedom if he would swear never to reveal the location of Pulo Gular, though none of us could more than conjecture its whereabouts, because of the precautions taken when we were carried there. The old Don gladly agreed to the proposition. Ching Along then intrusted father with a private signal which would ever after save his ships from capture. And he further told my father, in my presence, that if he was ever in want of money — whether it were thousands or millions — he had but to show the pirate signal by night, in the vicinity of Pedro Branco, until some of the fleet discovered it, when word would be brought to the king; and the sum he requested could not be so large but it should be supplied.

"I was to be spoken of as dead, as well as my darling mother; but I was left at liberty to meet my father at Canton or Singapore, whenever I wished. The admiral himself took Don Osmanti to Manila, and landed him from his own boat at my father's wharf. Though it was night, one of the English officials chanced to see the admiral, who was one of the grandest-looking men in the world, as you can vouch for; and the consular official remembered the circumstance years after, to my father's detriment.

"For several years after, the house of Osmanti flourished beyond all precedent; partly because the vessels of Gular robbed many other merchant ships, but spared

those of the Osmanti. This came to be observed at commercial centers, jealousy arose out of it, and the English merchants sent some of their captains to sail in the employ of Osmanti to discover the secret.

"As it was necessary to intrust the signals to supercargo or captain, there came a time when one of the English spy captains acquired the secret. This man announced his determination to inform the English government, unless he was made the recipient of a large sum of money. His threat was injudiciously spurned, and he disclosed the method of signals to the English government at Hong Kong. For a time they kept the matter quiet, endeavoring to entrap Don Osmanti into a large financial loan, purporting to be for immediate convenience.

"By numerous prevarications, they at length succeeded. The funds were loaned on time, but were not forthcoming when due. The proud house of Osmanti would have to go down without pecuniary aid from some source. After due deliberation, my father took ship to Pedro Branco, for he would not impart the special money signals to any one. After displaying his signal for several nights, one of the pirate vessels responded, and the Don sent a private cipher to Ching Along.

"This transaction was also spied upon, either by some one on board, or a spy cruising in the vicinity of Pedro Branco. Not many nights after the Don's return to Manila, the same English official, the consul, again witnessed the pirate admiral landing a large amount of treasure at the private wharf of the Osmanti. The consul had not forgotten his previous discovery of the great pirate chief, who in the interim had become known

throughout the China Seas as the admiral of the coast pirates. A standing reward of five thousand dollars had been offered for his head, which you have received.

"On the following day the firm was again in its glory, paying off its whole indebtedness, with liberal additions for interest during the overdue. This procedure clinched the previously known facts of complicity with pirates, coming to the knowledge of the English government at Hong Kong. When Don Osmanti subsequently attempted to visit his Canton house, he was seized at Hong Kong, and put upon trial.

"His ships then lying in the numerous ports of Bombay, Singapore, and Hong Kong were confiscated; himself tried, convicted, and condemned to the chain gang at Norfolk Island. This constituted one of the most unlawful international outrages known in maritime jurisprudence; without the right of jurisdiction from first to last. While Ching Along was collecting his fleet at Pulo Gular for the purpose of recapturing the Don, the good old man died of grief; and the English government was ten millions richer for his death."

Aloata sprang up from her seat and walked the cabin like a caged tiger, at her recurrent thoughts of the outrage. Black orbs never shone with fiercer fury, nor human form become more terrible in dramatic expression.

Lawrence could not but acquiesce — wickedly perhaps — in the justice of personal retribution, where the national arm of Spain was impotent to retaliate or retrieve. Pausing in her fiery wrestling, with flushed face and quickened respiration, the queen again addressed herself to her auditor, —

"Señor Capitaine, do you wonder that my father's daughter took an interest in the lightning strokes of revenge from that hour? That she took to manual exercise and feats of arms, as another girl takes to her guitar and needle work? From that day I was as much a pirate at heart as my noble lord the Admiral — than whom a braver and nobler soul never existed. Together we cruised in every neighboring sea, crusading like the knights of old for love of retribution rather than for plunder.

"Señor, you will not persuade me that I was over-much wrong, especially when I add that my husband — a noble of rank and probity in his country — had undergone much greater wrongs than my dear old father. The same predaceous government drove my Ching Along to piracy for revenge — but that is a story for another day.

"Suffice it to know that six months had not gone by, after Don Osmanti's death, before twice the amount confiscated and negotiated by the English government was lying in English gold within our vaults at Chandi Sewa, and sixty proud ships had been sunk or burned; their crews landed upon remote islands, and left to colonize as best they could. From the day of my ascension to the throne of Gular, it was agreed that there should be as little needless slaughter as possible. Revenge became too sweet to stay the hand, and, in spite of the proudest naval fleet of the world hunting upon our track, we are stronger in men and ships to-day than ever before.

"This is not the first time in the history of nations that governmental injustice has made brigands and

pirates of brave nobles and honest merchants. Piracy was once England's own national method of filling her exchequer, in the days of Drake, Frobisher, and Raleigh; and the 'virgin' queen took her share of the plunder. To-day they are less open in their predaceous transactions, but more avaricious and unscrupulous than of old, because they now strike at smaller game. It has become too unseemly to rob the ships of other nations upon the ocean highways; so the English war upon the poor Celestials, and compel them to accept the nefarious trade in opium. Thus England fills her coffers, and it matters little that she debauches a great people, too weak to resist her power of armed compulsion.

"I know, Señor Lawrence, you will think I speak with unnecessary bitterness; and deem that mere injustice to an individual or a community is not sufficient provocation for my being mated with a pirate king. But the story of my father and my husband is but one of many known at our Isle of Roses, where noble men have been driven from their homes by persecution.

"The story of the Admiral's ruin was sufficiently cruel to arouse my girlish sympathy and win the proud heart of a Spanish Señorita, who had aspired to a regal mating. But I have come to know that the circumstances of life are not of our making or within our control."

Softened and subdued by the presence of the man she loved, the proud young queen bowed her head upon the cabin table, and sobbed with uncontrollable grief at this retrospect of her erring life. Lawrence sat silent and subdued, compelled to a greater sympathy for the interesting young creature than he deemed prudent to acknowledge.

Presently Aloata lifted her head and shook back the dark ringlets from off her face, smiling through her tears like a sudden sunburst after a storm; ending with a ripple of laughter low-toned and tinkling as a peal of bells, and saying, as she rose to go on deck, half apologetic with shame at her tears, —

"Only once before, Señor, have I wept over this matter for years. Though grief and great wrong have been my heritage, the womanly trifle of tears has been a stranger to me. When word came that my noble Admiral had fallen by your hands, then my grief was strong and lasting, and I swore to be revenged upon you and yours. To-day it is but a sun-shower, the summer-day luxury of woman; truly a God-sent relief when the heart becomes choked with anguish; for with all my masculine courage your presence has made a woman of me again. But bear with me this once, Señor, you shall witness it no more." With a graceful courtesy, Aloata left her captive to his own reflections and found her way to the deck.

CHAPTER XXV.

VOYAGE TO THE PIRATE ISLE.

SOON after the queen went on deck, a sprightly maiden of about fifteen made her appearance, coming to light up the cabin lamps, and bring a message to Lawrence from Aloata. This was the girl who had so frequently taken the part of "sailor-boy," during the previous expeditions from the fast-boat. She came nimbly down the cabin stairs warbling a pretty Spanish aria, reluctant to cease her singing when she came into the presence of the captive American, before whom she courtesied, with a familiar smile, and proceeded to say, —

"The queen bids me say to the noble Señor that on no account is he to go on deck."

"Why is this restriction put upon me?" he curtly asked.

"Oh, Señor, not from any severity of my queen; for she's a darling, I assure you. But the crew are terribly bitter against you, Captain, and my mistress is afraid they will kill you if they get a chance."

"And who are you, my pretty maiden? You seem to be well taught and good-mannered, and yet I find you among bad people."

"Bad people? O horrors! I don't know what you mean, Señor. Our people are the best in the world; so fearless in battle, and so kind to one another. Of course,

some of our crews and many of the Point sailors are awfully bad. But we don't associate with them; and then the sailors of all nations are bad, for they drink and fight among themselves. I'm dreadfully sorry you think so meanly of our people at Gular."

"But you haven't told me who you are?"

"Oh, I'm Captain Puling's daughter, Pulin Puling."

"Where is this Pulo Gular they are taking me to?"

"Oh, mercy! it's way off in the ocean, where nobody can ever find it, but our own people. But then I'm not to answer any questions about that, so please don't ask me. I've come down to place your things in the after stateroom, which is all fitted up nicely for you. It has been my room, but I shall give it up willingly to so nice a gentleman, as I can sleep in one of the forward staterooms."

"Why not put me in the forward room as well?"

"Oh, Señor, all because the queen is so careful of your safety. She wants you near her, so she can defend you if aught happens to require it. The large forward room belongs to the queen, but we shall not change it to the fancy until to-morrow." The chattering Señorita busied herself tidying the queen's room, and removing Lawrence's wardrobe to the after stateroom.

While the cabin-maid was thus busied, Lawrence climbed upon the transom to watch the sailing of the fleet vessel. The two stern windows of the Arsi were large and airy, the transom having been purposely extended forward on the sides sufficiently to form a luxuriant lounging-place. There one could lie head to a window, and watch the whirling eddies in the wake,

and inhale the cool indraught from the ploughed-up waters.

Upon this cushioned transom Lawrence spent most of his waking hours, when left to himself. Choosing the comfortable place ostensibly for the fresh sea air, but in reality to acquire a position where he could carefully note everything in wind, water, and direction of sailing. Also, watch the sunrise and sunset, and in the night hours note the direction of the constellations at the north, with a hope of gleaning some intelligence about the course and distance sailed.

Thus far he had logged in his mind, with the conciseness of a practical seaman: Wind, southwest; course, southeast; vessel running with fresh beam-wind, making fifteen knots. Distance sailed . . . . blank. As the captain's chronometer had run down while he was drugged, he could not tell whether he had been to sea one day or two. So far, the Arsi had been sailing in green water, but while Lawrence lay watching the sickly green foam-bubbles in the wake, suddenly the sea-crests flashed up snow-white and sparkling. The vessel had run out of coast-soundings into the deep blue water of the mid-China Sea.

Thus, three days passed without any apparent change in the surroundings. The monsoon continued strong and steady, varying, as near as Lawrence could define at night by Cassiopeia and her compeers in the sky, from southwest through the day, to south-southwest during the night. The captive was bearing up manfully, philosophizing as only a brave heart could do; for matters might easily have been worse, and, whether good or

bad, he must bear it with the best grace he could command.

Several times during the following day hours Aloata came down and challenged Lawrence to a game of chess. He always accepted the challenge as a courtesy due to the kindness of his captor. But he played a different game from their previous contests at Canton. There he was swayed by deference to the sex of his opponent. Here the chess battles were lifted to another level, for his heart was too full of bitterness to yield an iota to the sex of his opponent. The effect of being daily beaten by Lawrence's brilliant combinations did not affect Aloata as he had supposed. She was not the least crestfallen by his successful finesse, but remained content with her capacity of mastering each new set of moves, so that her loved contestant could not again use them with impunity.

During these brief pastimes, while apparently giving her whole attention to the games, the keen-witted woman was also closely studying her companion. The noble nature of the man daily grew upon her, filling her young heart with an irresistible love. Yet, as her love deepened, she tasked herself not to obtrude her unwelcomed affection upon the dear object of her passion. For this Lawrence was grateful; and in many ways expressed his gratification for the queen's delicate consideration of his testiness and impatience at his captive condition.

Late one afternoon, the queen came down and sought to vary the pastime of her captive by singing to her own accompaniment on the guitar. She was gifted with a

dexterous touch upon various musical as well as war-like instruments, and endowed with a powerful voice of rare timbre and sweetness. Singing thus, she was often tempted to plead her own cause in melody. After one of these occasions she drew a discussion pertaining to herself and her captive, which created quite a sharp debate.

"Señor, the more you discourse to me of the exemplary qualities of another, the more you madden me with my loss. My whole brief life has been one eager outlook for some great soul to comprehend me. Oh, noble heart, weigh me not in your estimation by the opprobrious term *pirate*, which you find clinging to my skirts. It arose out of no natural selection of mine, but from the imperative event of my captivity, — your own conditions at this moment. My Castilian blood is as regal and remote in descent as the proudest English of them all. Such as I am, I am eager to be recast, re-annealed into goodness and greatness, whatever you choose to make of me."

To which Lawrence replied with unnecessary severity, — "You have said truly that I am your captive. But, Lady Osmanti, that circumstance must not be construed into an element of coercion. The *lex talionis* is the same everywhere, and your subjects can run me up to the yard-arm if they like, and leave me dangling like a jewel-block in the sun. Or you can add a friendly cannon shot to my avoirdupois, and drop me gently down through the blue element over which we sail. But understand me fully and fairly, fear of death never troubles me; therefore, the mere accident of captivity contains no element of persuasion for me."

For an instant the appealing woman became transformed into the imperious queen, and a fierce gleam of the old arrogance flashed from her coal-black eyes, — a wicked menace of danger to her scornful captive. But the thunderbolt was withheld by the newly acquired tenderness in Aloata's heart. Little by little the tense lines softened about her lips, and the stern flutings on her forehead were obliterated before she replied, —

"Capitaine, is there not a spice of needless cruelty in thus taunting me with the usual buccaneering methods of dealing with prisoners? Especially after I have abjured all intent to harm you. Is it becoming our relative positions of captive and captor to thus remind me of my power of life and death over you, as the chieftess of a great war fleet used to dealing summarily with her foes? Rather do I not deserve some commendation for staying the just onslaught of my vindictive men? For Señor Capitaine well knows that mine is a position of personal peril, requiring a degree of courage which few women possess."

The touch of sadness in Aloata's tones of rebuke showed that the iron had burned deeply, and Lawrence hastened to deprive his apparent taunt of its sting, —

"Forgive me, noble queen, for the seeming severity of my remarks. I spoke with no such purpose as you deem. But as you yourself found liberation from bondage by conforming to a forced marriage, it becomes me to dissuade you strongly of there being any element of hope to be derived from my captivity."

With a smile of sadness, Aloata rose up and extended

her hand, saying as she tarried a moment in the doorway, before ascending to the deck, —

"Let me hope that we shall succeed in covering every ground of discussion we touch upon, so it may never recur to mar our future intercourse. Remember that a person feeling as I do toward you, señor, can never bear malice."

Lawrence was left to himself for the rest of the day. Aloata kept to the deck, or the officer's cabin, forward of her own.

Pretty Pulin was attentive, and brought the meals and served them daintily, with a deal of maidenly gossip about the vessels sighted from deck, and the doings on shipboard.

Late in the evening, after the night watch had been set, and Aloata had given her orders for the night, she came down and found Lawrence brooding in the dim starlight by the lee cabin window. The queen seated herself on the divan at his feet, and with delicate, womanly tact drew him out of his moody thoughts into a discussion of the physical geography of the dangerous mass of coral isles and shoals bordering the south side of the sea. Lawrence was an enthusiast in sea-lore, as his companion learned at Canton, and willingly gave his attention to any strange phenomena of the ocean.

Aloata had been the intelligent companion of the great Admiral for four years, sailing and resailing through every inter-island sea, and among the countless shoals of the Malay archipelago. It well became the pirate navigators to become familiar with every dangerous reef and channel-way, to enable them to escape from

their English pursuers. The queen's memory seemed indelible, and her faculty of location of places and sea-soundings was such as only sailors can acquire; as they attain the faculty of balancing in a sea-way, — a marvelous degree of unconscious counterpoise, which ever keeps them perpendicular.

Sometimes in the midnight watches, when Aloata heard Lawrence leave his stateroom, and climb to the transom windows to secretly make his observations, she would herself put on some thin wrap, and come out to keep him company. Taking her usual seat on the divan below him, with her long, disheveled hair hanging down her back, she appeared in the dim starlight like a black-winged spirit intent upon his welfare.

In the morning watch during the fourth night out, as they sat thus in the starlight, while Aloata's loving heart was unusually impassioned by the magnetic influences presiding over the antelucan hours, she adroitly induced Lawrence to give an outline sketch of his sea-life. Then with childish delight she subsequently drew him on to relate the story of his home life in boyhood, wherein he pictured his devoted mother and loving sisters, ending by disclosing a delicious episode of youthful love with a fickle fair, whose affection was not sufficiently enduring to outlast a sea voyage. This experience led the queen to further exemplify the uncertainties of life by her own sad fate, —

"Oh, señor, what a riddle is this problem of life! What a contradiction of purposes your coming has made in the checkered existence of Aloata Osmanti. Born to unlimited affluence, and lapped in the luxury which

deprives one of the knowledge of human necessities, — circumstances which are supposed to compass all ends by endowing us with the best joys of this life, and furnishing a passport for the world to come. To me these unlimited resources have brought nothing but ruin, and in your eyes irrevocable degradation.

"My cousin, the fickle and fanatical Eugénie de Montijo, married the Emperor of France. While I was affianced to a prince of Spain, who solicited my hand in person at Manila, and for whom I was educated. Instead, I became mated with a pirate king, and am now abhorred by the only man capable of subduing my imperious soul.

"Educated in a convent with scrupulous care and careful religious training, I stepped into the arena of life with the world lying at an incline before me, down which I had but to glide to any degree of happiness desired. O noble man! tell me, if you can, why I was led to choose an austral course, which led me to captivity, imprisonment, and subsequent banding with pirates. All the other cardinals were open to my choosing, and yet it was my own importunities that led Don Osmanti to take me and his family on the ill-starred voyage to Bombay. O Señor Lawrence, pity me, pity me! and intone your curses for my ear gently as you can, for I was born to a better heritage than has fallen to my lot."

Half crazed with the remembrance of her misfortunes, Aloata seized Lawrence's hand and pressed it passionately to her forehead, which seemed bursting with her woe. Rising with stern deliberation from his recumbent position, the reluctant heart of her recipient suddenly

gave way before the majestic inundation of sorrow, and he tenderly lifted the head of the sorrowing queen to his breast.

A long, sweet pause of silent communion ensued before either changed position in the least. The sentient vessel swayed gently to the ocean swell, with a sympathetic, lullaby motion. No sound disturbed their reflections but the creaking yards, as the vessel rose and fell on the seas, together with the resonant beating of two hearts brought into strange proximity. With his free hand Lawrence stroked the queen's raven ringlets, which were silver-rayed by the star-beams that peered spirit-eyed through the cabin windows.

Sitting there in the stillness and the starlight, linked by an outburst of sympathy, in striking semblance of two lovers, — one was questioning the mysterious workings of God's omnipotence, strong in his own integrity, and heedless of the powerful fascination which his companion was weaving about him with meshes of steel: the other was bitterly lamenting the necessity of their beating hearts ever being dissevered.

The queen was the first to find voice. Raising her tearful eyes, she thanked Lawrence in tremulous tones for his sympathy, with a glad, sweet smile which expressed the supreme of human happiness. It were better that she had not spoken. The enthusiasm of the moment had passed, and, though her companion replied kindly, any reply seemed almost cruel.

"Do not mistake me, Aloata; no, not for an instant, for there is not a ray of love in my response to your grief-stricken heart-cry. Your terrible wrongs led me

to condole with you, and my sympathy is heartfelt and abundant. But, living or dead, there is but one woman who shall ever receive the true homage of my heart again."

"Peace, peace! Say no more, I pray you. Do not intensify your cruelty by repeating that your love can never be mine, and thus belittle the precious guerdon of sympathy you have just bestowed upon an aching heart. Believe me, noble man, I comprehend the stern integrity of your love for another as no other woman on earth can do.

"Fear not to degrade your love for the old Earl's daughter, for the object of your affection is as grand and noble as yourself, and will not chide you for wrong doing in a matter of sympathy for me. Mark me, Señor, I too have tested the quality of your affianced, and can vouch for the capacity of her patrician soul."

"Where could you have met Lady Seymour?"

"At the Ladrone Palace, on the night of your betrothal. I interviewed Lady Lucia in her chamber while my ruffians were attending to you at the cliff stair. I went there to kill her because of her love for you, whom I hated. But I found her more worthy to live than I supposed. Were it not so, Aloata of Gular would have flung the slightly formed girl over the balcony that night, and in this hour none could have stood between me and the man I love."

"Great God! what do I hear?"

"Yes, Señor, you have to thank me for sparing her life, as well as your own. I had watched you laving your soul in the ambrosia of a maiden's love, until my

heart grew purple with hatred at the sight, and I determined that you both should die.

"When I stood face to face with your patrician beauty, with my envious heart consumed to a cinder by hatred, her bewitching charms transformed my hate into admiration; because of her unquailing courage, and the irrevocable integrity of her love for you. For this I spared her life, even while I held her in my strong grasp fluttering like a ribbon out over the black abyss, with dire intent to cast her headlong into the sea."

"Merciful Heavens! Woman, did you not terrify her by your rudeness?"

"Not so, Capitaine. Your irreproachable Seymour has the courage of her convictions. She did not conceive of my murderous intent until the last moment, and even then she showed not a quaver of fear, and she refused to abate her love for you, though I threatened her with death. I learned in that hour the value Lady Lucia placed upon a manly love; and I determined to see for myself if you were the noble soul that she portrayed."

Lawrence had listened to Aloata's forcible utterances with absorbing interest, and he now drew a quick respiration of relief, as he replied with much feeling, while generously tendering his hand in acknowledgment, —

"Then I have to thank you for Lady Lucia's life, as well as my own? And I do thank you, noble queen, with the best impulses of my heart, however equivocal the motives that prompted your acts. You have been endowed with a terrible power of life and death over me and mine. And when goaded by the death of your husband, and hounded on by the revengeful cry of

your followers, the provocation to retribution was great. That you have withstood these temptations, shows that you are a woman of no common order."

Aloata took the proffered hand, while a gleam of sudden joy mantled her glowing face.

She further expressed her gratitude with tearful eyes, while with heartfelt emotion she pressed her lips to his hand, with the reverence of a saint kissing her cross — the holy emblem of her creed.

Lawrence willingly permitted the contrite woman to expend her grateful emotions, ere they retired to their staterooms for the rest of the night. Before he slept, he prayed earnestly that in his own beneficent way the All-Wise might make some speedy ending of this stupendous wrong, inflicted upon one so capable of the best possibilities of her sex; and he soon had cause to believe that his supplications met with response in a more befitting manner than he could have devised.

CHAPTER XXVI.

ALOATA'S LAST BATTLE.

THE fifth day out, when Lawrence climbed to the transom to make his morning observations, he was surprised to find that the ultra-marine color of the sea had changed during the night to a vivid pea-green; while the surface of the sea had become smooth as a mountain mere, and not a vestige of swell remained.

This implied that the vessel had run under the lee of land. Though land was not in sight from the stern windows, it certainly was not far away to windward, and Lawrence argued that it must be low land, because it did not diminish the force of the monsoon. The Arsi was still careened to a spanking breeze, and dashed through the green water at great speed.

The sea-wash from the windward shore soon became of great interest to the captive, who, meaning to escape in an open boat at the first opportunity, now endeavored to propound an augury of his whereabouts and prospects; as did the sailor Columbus, four centuries ago.

While leaning from the cabin window, wondering what his fate would be, there came a cluster of cocoa-nuts, yellow with new ripening, and fresh-torn from the tree. Older nuts followed, hollow and milkless, with dry, brown husks, floating like a cork on the surface, and showing long, white rootlets, ready to grapple, like

an emigrant, to the first new-found land which offered a foothold.

After the oranges and cocoanuts had been left far astern, the vessel crossed a tide-rip containing lemons and guavas, recently thrown into the sea. Beyond these the water was strewn with vines and flowers; the vanda lowii vine, and scarlet hibiscus blossoms. Then came a wreath such as the native girls of the Suloo sea construct. These last driftings gave Lawrence some hint of his whereabouts.

One is often brought to solemn reflections while pondering over the drifting débris of Ocean. Suddenly the body of a fair-faced native girl came heaving up in the wake, the vessel having passed over her floating corpse. Both of her girlish hands were clutched fast to a broken paddle, as though the implement had broken in her grasp and precipitated her into the sea. Cramp or other cause had prevented her saving herself, for such perfect swimmers are rarely drowned. Such a theory would imply that the girl was alone, else her companions would have saved her. Lawrence's first thought was to rush on deck and request a boat to be lowered. But upon second thought he remembered that he was among death-makers, not death-savers.

The fleet vessel sped on without a sign of regret at thus trampling upon the dead maiden, and other dead drift soon came to attract his attention. A large and lordly palm tree soon went drifting by, with great clusters of fruit still clinging to the dead parent, as the offspring might cling to a drowning mother. The palm had evidently been uprooted in the recent typhoon, and

hurled from some declivity or marginal shore, unbroken, into the sea.

Among the drift about the tree were two dead birds, a "rain-bird," or the blue-billed gopher, and a beautiful red-breasted dove, with scarlet feet and bill. Though inveterate enemies in life, these tropic beauties were found floating wing-to-wing in death. An emblem of the hereafter which might apply to us all.

The Arsi ran on many miles without other notable event. The breeze held fairly well, and the vessel breasted the grass-green sea as if impatient of her bourn. At length there came whirling up from beneath the keel a fine shrub of blood-red berries, dotted with jet-black eyes. These berries reminded Lawrence of the joy such berries once imparted to one Captain Columbus, upon a long-gone October day. They became to the delighted Genoese a red-footed messenger from the yet unseen Indies which he sought, that were not far away.

Vestiges of land now thickened with each onward bound of the vessel. Something of interest was momentarily brought into view, all of which impressed Lawrence with the prolific beauty of the fruitful isles, as yet unseen.

The queen came down rosy and bright, gladdened by the near approach to her Isle of Roses. She brought down a half-grown milk-cocoanut for Lawrence, whom she linked with her every joy in spite of his reluctance to be loved. One of the officers had hooked up the cluster of nuts, opened the one pervious eye ready for drinking, and presented it to the queen. She poured out a

goblet full for herself and captive, and together they regaled upon the delicious nectar.

Aloata reported land in sight, and said that the Arsi would be at anchor in Gular before night if the breeze held fresh. She advised Lawrence not to ask her, or others, what land it was, as it were best he should not know at present, adding that if he ever left Gular he would be put upon oath never to disclose their retreat to the world. She merrily related the events of her own capture five years before, when a sail was hung over the cabin windows to prevent passengers from seeing out; while some of the prisoners were confined until the vessel reached port.

"But you, Señor, are the one man of all in this world whom Aloata can trust, not alone with her Isle, but herself, with no safeguard but your own unquestioned honor not to betray us."

"Thanks for your confidence, most noble queen. I cannot do otherwise than to promise unasked not to betray yourself and your island during your lifetime, in part requital for some precious obligations in the past. So you do not intend to restore me to liberty very soon, as I glean from your remarks?"

"How can you expect it, noble Señor? But please to spare me all questionings on that subject at present. Let me live yet a little while upon hope, however delusive it may be, as but little happiness seems to await me in the future."

The queen continued to edge away toward the door as she replied to the awkward questioning, and disappeared up the companion-way, glad to escape. Soon after

Aloata's departure, there came a loud call from the mast-head, implying that something of importance was in sight. As Lawrence leaned from the cabin window with ears and eyes alert, a sudden elbow was made in the wake of the vessel, and her course was changed by luffing sharp into the wind, until she headed back from whence she came.

Aloata soon after came down to explain matters to her captive. She related that the lookout had discovered a steamer's smoke, just as the Arsi was about to enter the tortuous reef-channel that led to their island-home. She had ordered the vessel put about until the stranger disappeared, as it would not be safe to disclose the entrance to Gular to even a passing vessel.

The queen showed no uneasiness about the matter. But in a little while there was another outcry from the mast-head, where Hong Along, the first lieutenant, had gone to make observations. While Lawrence and the queen were listening, Pulin came down pallid with fear, and much too scared to impart the message she brought. Then came the lieutenant, making his appearance at the cabin door, flushed and excited with the startling news he bore.

"Captain Aloata, the wind is dropping fast, and a large English war steamer is in chase, astern. She is coming from the direction of Manila, has discovered us, and is overhauling us quickly. The chances now seem much against us."

"All right, good Hong Along. Pipe the hands to quarters and man the sweeps at once. Tauten your sails to the utmost, and sprinkle them well, for the breeze will freshen within an hour."

"Ay, ay, noble queen. I hope it may prove so."

"Hark you, brother Hong. At your first leisure moment go and lay the train to the magazine. If we cannot escape this surly Englisher, we'll give him battle, and then stick to the admiral's old plan: induce the enemy to board, then retreat below and blow all to glory together. Now away to your work. Cheer the men, and put the best face on the matter. I'll be with you soon." Adding to Lawrence, as the officer sprang up the gangway and passed out of hearing, —

"You see, Señor, the glorious fate we aspire to, rather than be made captive by the hated foe. With such an exit, well matured and deliberately adopted, there is no danger we may not dare. This was always Admiral Ching Along's plan, and it shall always be mine."

While talking, and unfolding her plans to her companion, Aloata was busily occupied in and out of her stateroom, adorning herself in a jaunty, brigandish-looking dress, wisely asserting that it served to fascinate her seamen, as a shining bauble amuses an infant. When she emerged from her room she was arrayed royally, as for a carnival — though it were a carnival of death.

Her bodice of crimson satin was richly ruffled at the throat, with a triple string of pearls about her neck, to which a coral cross was suspended. The skirt was a flame-colored Pena, veined with threads of red satin, the whole bespangled with tiny stars of gold, inlaid with gems of great brilliance. Her Spanish hat was bound with red, and decked with long crimson plumes from the *Burong rubra.*

A starry baldrick of blue velvet, studded with gems,

crossed her chest and joined a belt of the same material. In her belt were a pair of ivory-handled pistols and a jewel-hilted dagger — her constant companion — to which she now added a short cutlass, with scabbard of gold.

Never had Lawrence seen the proud young creature look so grand and beautiful, as she thus stood arming herself with feminine ostentation before her mirror. She who usually dressed so plainly and becomingly on ordinary occasions. Aloata looked up and caught Lawrence's look of admiration, and blushed to the color of her bodice, as she exclaimed, —

"Bueno! Señor Lawrence, were you admiring my gewgaw dress, donned for other eyes than yours, or did I detect one little spark of appreciation of the bearer of all this frippery?"

"Most noble lady, you take me back to the long-gone days of your Spanish ancestry; when such a fair lady, in such royal garb, would have brought many a Castilian grandee at her feet, and caused many a lance to be broken in her fealty."

"Fie, Señor. What are all the nobility of the past or present to me? Where love is not, the most desert place in your heart is more to be treasured."

When thus fully equipped, and after seeing that the charges were well home in her revolvers, Aloata kissed her hand to Lawrence and sprang up the cabin stairs to survey the scene, instinct with the heroism of a Boadicea; discoursing of battle and death as other women get enthused over bonnets and brocades.

Taking a telescope from the rack, Lawrence scanned the horizon astern, and soon discovered the dense black

smoke always emanating from an English vessel because of the soft coal she burns. The steamer was yet below the ocean's rim, and it would take her more than an hour to come up, provided it remained calm. The Arsi was being impelled at the rate of four knots under her sweeps, and, with a strong breeze to aid, there was not a steamer in the China Sea that could overhaul her.

As Lawrence sat watching the slowly approaching smoke, Pulin crept up from the divan and nestled cold and trembling at his side. Laying down his glass, he sought to establish a little courage in the pretty señorita. But before he had succeeded, Aloata came gayly down to report the prospect. Chiding her maid gently for her foolish fears, she bade her go to her stateroom until the battle was over. For the Arsi was now being cleared for action, and the officers had agreed to fight as long as the vessel could swim, and then — go up to glory!

Going to her stateroom, the queen brought out a package of parchment, to judge from its crackling noise when handled, made water-tight with oil-silk, and handed it to Lawrence as she took her seat by his side.

"Señor, here are my papers. Certificates of money and other valuables belonging to my father's estate, deposited in the Bank of England. Secure them upon your person, for the end draws near, and I shall have other matters to think of at the last. If I am killed, promise to accept all, from one whose last thought will be of you; all necessary documents to entitle you to the gift will be found within."

"Is there no hope of a breeze?"

"Not until the steamer closes with us."

"If you really must fight to the bitter end, I will accept your gift, and make the best use of it I can."

"I believe we are doomed, and I will endeavor to make a gala day of it. If I am shot, and Hong enters the cabin to fire the train, leap from the stern window at once and swim for the steamer. If I live, I shall fire the fuse myself, and will give you *thirty seconds* to escape in. Remember to keep your head well out of water during the concussion, for it will be death to every living thing beneath the surface at the time.

"You may be killed by the falling timbers, but that will be the work of Fate; and there will be one glad heart to meet you in the far beyond, and be your spirit-love forever. I shall keep command throughout the battle myself, and I beg that you will not attempt to come on deck to embarrass me by your presence. Pray for us both in the interval before the battle; and, if you could decide to go with us, you would make me the happiest of mortals."

Lawrence shook his head, and persisted in escaping if he could. Smiling through her tears, the brave woman went forth to meet her death as another might go to a bridal. True, there was a tremulous quivering of her thin vermilion lips at the last; a gentle, loving, lingering look of exquisite tenderness at thought of parting, but it was from no wish to live or fear to die. It was the agony of a strong, rich nature welling up to the heart and eyes while endeavoring to memorize every feature of the dear face so loved, so adored.

It was some time before Lawrence could free his eyes from the slow intruding tears sufficiently to use the tel-

escope. When he did, he could plainly distinguish the mast-heads of the steamer, and could see the English officers in the cross-trees, scanning the wished-for prize.

In half an hour more her great Blakely gun could be seen on the bow, dipping up and down at the line of the horizon; rising and falling upon the long undulation of the ocean. The steamer's smoke jetted spitefully out from her two red stacks, as if impelled by the quick, sharp force of the exhaust-steam, let in to increase the draft.

Another half-hour passed. Then the black muzzles of her broadside guns came slowly into view; now seen upon the one side, and then upon the other, as the vessel veered a trifle, and rolled in the undulation, from the immense pressure that was impelling her through the sea.

Listening closely to glean what impression had been made upon the deck-gang, Lawrence could not distinguish the least quickening of the long steady rhythm of their hundred sweeps. While the clear, brave voice of Captain Aloata was heard encouraging the rowers to their task, with what enthusiasm a fearless woman may impart to less courageous men. Hark! to her exultant rallying.

"Cheerily! my brave ones. Pull strong and steady. A breeze may come yet, and then we'll show our heels. 'Twill be an hour before yon fellow closes upon us. And if he comes — I see it in your eyes — we will fight him to the death!" A hoarse peal of cheers was their reply.

"Come, Hootie, lighten the load with another song.

That's bravely done! That will reach the ears of the Britishers. Pull to the chime! pull to the song! There she leaps! There she flies!"

A half-hour passed, and the rumbling boom of the great Blakely pivot-gun came singing a dirge over the sea, sounding like remote thunder. A monstrous shell burst out on the starboard quarter, tearing up the sea half as large as the breach of a whale.

Their elevation had been excellent; a little improvement in the range and they would brew mischief. A cheer went up from the pirates, while Aloata's laughter rippled as musically as a flute in solo. She urged another song, as their best reply to the Blakely.

"Come, Scottie, it's your turn for a song. Music makes the boat glide. The breeze is mending a little, and that frolic of the fellow astern favors the rising wind. Come, Scottie, sing away; else there's nae moot in yees, mon, at tha ding o' ther clatter astern."

And the brave young queen fairly ridiculed the pale-faced Scotchman out of his fears, until he sang a few snatches of "Bonnie Dee," amid the rollicking cheers of the seamen.

The chase was gaining but slowly now, as the breeze was rising steadily, and she soon let fly another shell from the pivot-gun. Lawrence watched the beautiful curve of the shell as it came screaming through the air, until it seemed as if it would fall within the very window where he lay. He withdrew his glass and listened to hear it strike.

The shell went screeching over the vessel and burst in the water beyond, appearing to have done no harm. But

Captain Aloata was heard encouraging the oarsmen to their work, saying, —

"Only a big splinter from the hounds of our main-mast, no harm done; let him try again. The fellow is amusing us finely. Never a man of you heard shriller music to row by. Leap away with her, my merry men. A little more wind and a little more ash, and we'll show our heels to the fellow astern. Hong Along! let fly your stern pivot at the Britisher. The recoil of the gun will help the Arsi ahead. Keep up a steady fire for a while, else the fellow will think we are unmindful of his compliments. Show your practice at that knot of noble English about the bow-gun."

"Ay, ay! noble queen. I'll teach the brave Johnnies how a small dog may have a big bark," replied the lieutenant, as he trained his gun so as to cover the steamer.

When Lawrence heard the queen's order, he quickly placed himself in position, and trained his glass on the black cluster of English officers seen about the big Blakely. Then came the report over his head, and he was just in focus with his telescope to witness the havoc made by the plunging shot from the pirate, which killed a number of the group.

The pirates yelled with delight, to see the scattering among the mass of officers about the bow-gun.

The steamer yawed sufficiently to bring her broadside guns to bear, and let fly with her four thirty-twos, cutting off the mizzen-mast a few fathoms above the deck, and plowing up the planking in the bow of the fast-boat. This called for a force of men to clear away the

wreck of sail and bamboo yards, which had fallen upon the rowers.

Both vessels were now in range, and the battle was fairly begun. But Aloata still kept her sweeps at work vigorously, saying, —

"That's but a little mast, and we can spare it, if it troubles them. Pull away, and never mind it. We can outsail him yet, with a little more breeze and a little longer stroke. The wind is rising, sure as you live. Now for a long stroke, and a steady one. Scottie and Pallawan are just making up their minds for a song: now you'll see the oars bend — now you'll see the ash break!"

This said to ridicule the growing fears that were steadily creeping into the hearts of many of the hundred rowers, as indicated by their pallid faces. Now came another shell from the Blakely, cutting away the main-mast, and splintering the fore too severely to carry sail upon in a fresh breeze. All thought of escape was now ended. They must now turn at bay and fight, and die; for the odds were heavy against them.

Order was at once passed to clear away the wreckage, to ship in the sweeps, and arm to repel boarders. The gun-crews were already plying their three pivot-guns as fast as they could load and fire, doing fine execution with every shot.

The wreck of the masts was soon cut away, freeing the deck for action, and disencumbering the Arsi so that she could be maneuvered by the sweeps. The steamer worked her broadside guns steadily, the range having become too short to depress the Blakely upon the low-setting fast-boat.

The English made every endeavor to rake the Arsi, but Captain Aloata was too expert to permit anything but broadside to broadside, and the great hull of the steamer received every shot fired from the pirate's guns.

Again and again the commander of the steamer tried to rake the wily pirate. But with the watchful eye of Aloata upon the helm, and the use of a few forward sweeps, the Arsi could be turned as upon a pivot, and kept plying her three thirty-twos steadily as clock-work.

At length there came a thirty-two pounder crashing through the cabin, entering at one side and going out at the other. It cut the body of poor Pulin in two, as she lay cowering for safety in her berth, and passed out through Aloata's stateroom, smashing things generally.

This brought Aloata to the gangway, hailing, —

"Are you hurt, Señor Capitaine?"

"No, thank you. How goes the battle up there?" For Lawrence did not then know of pretty Pulin's death.

"All goes merrily! It's our last fight, and it shall be our best." She then turned her attention to the battle: "Slash away, my men! that last from the midship gun was a good one. Load quick and fire fast, my lads. Such a broad mark you never had before. 'Tween wind and water with every shot; there's where his boilers lie."

Lawrence started to go up to where Aloata was standing in the companion-way. As he came out into the entry, there he discovered half the dead body of the Spanish maiden, cut literally in two at the waist. He laid it tenderly back into the berth with the other remains, and covered all with a light muslin for her winding-sheet.

Climbing the stairs to where Aloata stood in the gangway, Lawrence drew her attention to his presence by pulling at her dress; so full of admiration for the glorious creature that he wished much to go out on deck and witness the battle.

She gave him her hand, and returned his greeting; but not for a moment did she look away from her work, which required her constant attention. The steamer was again trying by every device to assume a raking position. As the fore-mast had just been shot away — leaving the Arsi without sail — the maneuver now appeared feasible.

But Aloata conned the helm, while, in addition to the forward sweeps, she got out several on the quarter, and continued to present her broadside in spite of every maneuver of the steamer's. Seeing this, the English commander shut off steam, content to fight it out to a close.

Aloata then found a moment to put her head below the companion-way to greet her captive. Smiling with a delirious joy through the smoke of battle, while her cheeks glowed like roses, and her eyes flashed with living lights, she asked, —

"What would you, Señor Capitaine?"

"I would like to come up and witness the battle, if you will move from the gangway."

"Not for the world! My seamen are like madmen just now, and at sight of you would leave the fight to cut your throat in an instant. Be patient, my dear one. — Up with your helm! Man your sweeps there for'ard! Out with a pair of them on the quarter! The

big bully is not satisfied to fight fair, with his pygmy foe.

"So, let her lie! Now fire away at your best. Plug him at wind and water — feel your way along his water-line. Stir yourselves! for 'tis the jolliest fight e'er man of you saw before.

"O my Lawrence, this is glorious! It is grand! I would let you up, my loved one, if I dared. But my wolves are famished for blood, and it would kill me to see you murdered in this frenzy of rage. So be patient, and let me fight it out to the end."

She withdrew her attention wholly to the battle again. Lawrence remained upon the niche in the curve of the stair, beside her, and the two clung hand in hand, knit together by the tie of heroism, and that highest of all kindred sympathies, where two stand glorying at the shock of arms in unequal fight.

The roar of battle, and the ringing shout; the crash of shot, and the responding fire; the smoke of cannon, and the sulphurous smell of powder, well might make a brave heart like Lawrence's wild to go out upon the battle-stained deck, and witness the clang of arms with eyes, as well as ears. But he knew Aloata was right, and he would not distress the last moments of one who loved him so well, by risking a conflict with her battle-scarred demons.

Above the roar of the battle rung the dear voice of their queenly leader, her strong alto voice searching every warrior's heart like a bugle's peal. Well might it stir men's hearts to wildest deeds of daring. Well

might it prompt her pirate horde — chosen from a thousand of her bravest braves — to even greater exertion, though they were doing their utmost. Each command from that clear, exultant voice was as promptly obeyed as though coming from a god.

Now came a great crash amidships, as though a thunderbolt were hurled from the clouds; the main pivot-gun — the Long Tom of the fast-boat — was throttled by a shot, and knocked from its mountings. Aloata tasked herself to soothe the rage of her men, and assuage their grief, —

"Never mind the Long Tom, my hearties! He's served us well! Fight away with your other guns, and stand by to fill the death-gaps merrily. Lower your aim there, Hong Along, fasten your teeth lower in the steamer's side! Strike the water a fathom from the hull. Plunge your shot! and probe deeper; feel your way for'ard for his boilers. Hootie! carry me the same order to the for'ard gun-capitan. Bid him train low and feel along aft."

Never in his whole life had Lawrence felt so truly that there was the cunning fetish of woman's instinct in that order. It coincided with his reason, for the pirates had served their guns well along the whole water-line; and the steamer's boilers must be still lower in the hold or they would have been reached long since. Lawrence now listened intently, as one over a mine nervously awaits its explosion. And he had not long to wait, for the explosion came!

When the third plunging shot was fired from the quarter-gun — each shot feeling its way steadily for-

ward — there came a terrific din on board the steamer. Either a boiler or a steam-chest had been pierced, and for a time the fire of the Englishman ceased, while his hatchways and the shot-holes in his side emitted steam, like smoke from a crater.

CHAPTER XXVII.

DEATH OF ALOATA.

WHEN the confusion somewhat abated on board the Barracuda, the Englishman's tactics were evidently changed. The pirate had found the steamer's vulnerable point, and the battle should now end by a death-grapple. The helm was put up, the jibs were hoisted, and the slow-moving steamer payed off before the wind with the purpose of boarding the fast-boat, which lay riddled through and through with more than fifty shot-holes.

Again the clarion voice of Aloata was heard giving orders, which showed that she comprehended the nice points of the situation, —

"Spike the for'ard gun, and stand by for boarders! Hong Along, load the quarter-gun to the muzzle with grape!"

"It will burst her to tatters, foul as she is!"

"Let it burst. We will not fire the gun until its muzzle is among our foes."

The steamer had payed off, and was forging slowly down upon the Arsi, steering to strike her amidships. About fifty of the bloodthirsty pirates had collected on the quarter-deck, stripped to pants, hats, and shoes. Their faces were begrimed with powder, and the hairy chests and brawny arms of many of them were bleeding

with ghastly wounds. But they were armed to the teeth, and the lurid gleam of battle-mad men still burned in their ferocious eyes. They stood in triple lines across the deck, impatient for the end, nervously handling their cutlasses, as ambushed tigers exercise their claws when couched to spring upon the approaching foe.

Not a word was spoken by that grim phalanx of men as they watched the approaching steamer rise and fall upon the swell; now dipping into the trough of the sea, and now towering high above the low-setting fast-boat. Her bows white with the swarm of eager British tars ready to leap, cutlass in hand, when their vessel collided with the foe.

It was a moment when the hearts of brave men beat like a drum-corps in battle, — when the thunderbolt nurses its wrath for greater destruction, — when the coming tempest whispers in softer than infant breathings, ere it howls over the ocean with the vengeance of a thousand demons let loose. At length, over that awe-chilling hush Aloata's dulcet voice was heard, speaking in the softest articulation of her high-keyed voice, to one of her favorite men, —

"Scotia, go ask the lieutenant to come aft here."

"Ay, ay, noble captain," whispered the awed Scotchman.

When the steps of Hong Along were heard approaching, such was the strong tension of Aloata's nerves that her quivering hand clutched Lawrence's with a grip of iron, the while she conversed with her first in command.

"Good Hong Along, is the train laid carefully to the magazine, as I directed?"

"It is all right, my gallant queen."

"Does it lead to the tube in my stateroom, or must I go to the forward cabin to light the fuse?"

"It leads to the stateroom, where the admiral always led it for his own firing. But I will place myself near the magazine when we retreat, and, if you do not succeed, be sure that I will not fail."

"Here comes the steamer. Away, and make a strong feint of repelling boarders. Fall back stubbornly about the quarter-gun, which you are to burst before you retreat below. I will wave my saber-blade as a signal to retreat. One minute after your men leave the deck I will light the fuse. Away, and lead your men to glory."

"Farewell, noble queen. We will meet your husband and my brother in the land beyond the sun."

The huge figure of the brave mandarin was soon seen at the head of fifty as ferocious fighters as ever manned a fast-boat. The bow of the Barracuda crashed in the mainsail of the Arsi just beaft the fore-chains. A huge grapnel was flung aboard, hove taut and secured; as the Arsi arose and ceased to careen before the black hull. Leaping from the guys, catheads, bobstays and martingale, there came, cutlass in hand, a hundred and fifty brave tars, bent upon making short work of the pirates who had fought them long and desperately.

In three minutes the contending foes crossed cutlasses. Then the ring of steel was like Alpine hail upon a warrior's mail. Hand to hand they fought, surging and heaving like contending billows. Now the one side swaying back before the mad onset of the other,

then the other side regaining its lost ground for a moment.

For a while the fifty wolfish pirates stood like beetling rocks in a mad sea, resisting the frenzied onset of their determined foes, and many an English seaman went down before their resistless blows.

For an instant Lawrence forced himself out on deck, beside Aloata, while she stood without the companion-way, waiting to draw her cutlass, preparatory to making her signal for the executive officer to retreat. In that moment the American saw the blended fronts of foe and foemen, witnessed the flash of falling steel, and the mad cut-and-thrust of men frenzied with brutal rage. Then Aloata rushed upon him, and compelled him to retreat, anxious as a young mother shielding her best loved, "Back, back to the cabin! Have I not enough to bear without your adding to my trouble? Down to the cabin, and make ready to leap from the window. I will linger but a moment to see a few more hated English die; then, Godward we'll go together!"

Lawrence stepped back into the companion-way, as she desired. But he lingered long enough upon the stairs to see the queen shake her glistening saber in the sunlight, and hear her give her last order to the maimed and powder-stained lieutenant, —

"Now, let fly your charge of grape, Hong Along; then retreat below. Adieu, Señor, *au plaisir de vous revoir!*"

Her battle task completed, Aloata sprang down the gangway, and entered the cabin to prepare for the final destruction of friend and foe. Lighting her port-fire, which hung ready at hand, she quickly adjusted the fatal

fuse that led to the magazine. Then, turning with flushed face and rapid respiration, she stood confronting the man she adored.

Grasping the outstretched hand of her loved one, her countenance kindled by the latent embodiment of love, she delved with superhuman glances into Lawrence's inmost soul; seeking, as only a keen-eyed woman may, for some token of response to her undying affection.

Who can portray the lustrous light of a loving woman's eyes in such transcendent moments? Eyes always iridescent and beautiful, now lambent with the borrowed luster of another world. Who can conceive the working of a woman's heart at such a time, when the agony of separation floods over her like a deluge?

Standing thus on the brink of eternity, Aloata's whole being was aflame to possess the object of her love; to snatch him up and transport him through the jasper gate which stood wide to receive her. As she stood face to face, piercing the inmost recesses of his soul, her lips paled and crimsoned, reddened and grew pallid again; quivering with burning words that her tongue refused to utter. When at length she found words, her voice was tremulous with emotion — as when one pleads in the conscious presence of the Heavenly Father.

"Dear Capitaine, would that you were going with me! Speak! Say that you will, and make me the happiest of mortals."

"I cannot consent to your plea. I have other dear ones to live for."

"True. It would be wrong. I ought not to have asked it. But 'twere so sweet to die together. Remember me,

Señor, and love me when I am gone. Darling, there can be no great sin in loving the dead. The dead, who so doted upon you in life. The dead, who forbore the sweets of retribution to save you, and who has loved you as none other can."

"Dear Aloata! I *will* remember you, and love you to the latest hour of my life."

"Then good-by, dearest and best of men. The blue heavens await me. Though I depart from you, I will never forsake you. Watch for my coming in the soft silence of the night, and in the solemn moments of prayer. For, as true as there is a God in the sky, I will plead your cause in every peril which assails you. Remember, I will come back to you when supernatural aid is most needed."

"I believe you, Aloata. I believe that such affection as yours is never disunited from its object, and I will watch for your coming."

Even while Aloata poured forth her torrent of words in a tear-touched voice, the terrific din of battle was going on overhead, which was to be brought to a climax by exploding the cannon, loaded with grape, and purposely overloaded for bursting. Hong Along had unaccountably delayed his retreat longer than the queen expected. But she would not prematurely ignite the fuse until the gun had accomplished its fiendish part in the tragic scene.

While awaiting the impending crisis, the queen continued to swing her port-fire sufficiently to keep it ignited for ready action. At length the cannon exploded, shattering the stern windows, the overhead skylight, and the

glass in the pantry. The noise of the explosion and the awful shrieks of the wounded were followed by a momentary hush. Then came Aloata's time to act.

"Now go, Capitaine. Leap from the window, and may God keep you, as only he can."

But, instead of releasing Lawrence's hand when she bade him begone, her cheeks flushed, and her eyes flashed with the latest human impulse which clings to a departing soul. She sprang upon his breast and twined her arms about his neck, while she pressed a lingering kiss upon his lips, with a relish as human as ever.

Separating herself with the calmness of exhausted grief — as when one turns from the grave where the best loved lies buried — Aloata took off her pearls, to which were attached a coral cross and diamond-studded Saviour, and reverently placed them on Lawrence's neck. Then drawing a silken cord from her bosom, to which was suspended the betrothal ring which Lawrence had given to Lady Seymour, she put it into his hand, saying:

"Take the necklace, and my precious symbols of worship, as the last proof of my love — poor Aloata's, the Pirate Queen of Gular! The ring was once your own. I took it from Lady Seymour a few hours after you bestowed it. It is the sole proof that I once spared her life, as well as your own." For an instant the queen's utterance choked, and her eyes flooded with tears, ere she continued, —

"Now go, darling. Leap through the window and swim for your life. My brave men are being hard pressed, and await their release. It is time that we should die."

Lawrence could only look his surprise as he received the ring, for the imperious young creature stood with her port-fire suspended perilously near the fuse, sternly intent upon her heroic purpose, and looking as relentless as the Fates, — a very dispenser of life to him, a fell demoness of death to her hated English foes.

Leaping through the window as she bade him, Lawrence plunged into the sea, and struck out with all his might for the steamer, whose stern had swung around within fifty feet of the fast-boat. He swam all the faster from being strongly impressed that Aloata would rather have his company than let him escape.

A strong, swift swimmer, he sought the shelter of the steamer's stern. But before he had reached half the distance the terrible concussion came, followed by a loud, deafening explosion, which hurled him headlong against the rudder of the steamer. Half stunned, he climbed into one of the rudder-chains, more dead than alive, but securely sheltered from the fast falling timbers which showered down everywhere.

Not a soul was living of the two hundred combatants on the fast-boat. Friend and foe had been stricken down while their gory fingers were clutched in each other's throats. The lee-bow and the bulwarks along half the length of the steamer were shattered by the explosion, and several seamen had been hurled overboard by the concussion. A boat was lowered for the half stunned men as soon as the débris of planks and timbers had ceased falling, and the wild confusion of the moment would allow.

As the boat pulled around the stern, after picking up

the floating men, the officer was greatly surprised to see a stranger hanging, half-stunned, in the bight of the lee rudder-chain. Who he was, or where he came from, none could tell. But, as humanity was involved, they pulled up and lifted the limp man into the boat, and hurried around to the gangway to get him on board before he expired, as he was unable to speak.

Once on board, one of the officers recognized him as Captain Lawrence, of the Fleetwing. No one had seen him leap from the cabin window — all were so intent upon the fight — and how he came to be saved, and lodged where he was found, when both the pirate vessel and her men were torn into tatters, remained a mystery to be solved by the captain himself, if ever he rallied.

Captain Forbes ordered Lawrence taken into his own cabin, and the surgeon was sent down immediately to his assistance. The doctor soon sent word that his new patient was not seriously hurt. He was left lying on the lounge, where the steward applied embrocations of spirits to his head and face, while the surgeon returned on deck to look after the wounded, and those who had just been rescued.

When all else of the exploded vessel had fallen into the wild vortex of waters — shattered timbers and headless men, splintered planks and other débris from the general destruction — there came slowly fluttering down through the eddying air a gayly colored something like a woman's veil. It evidently fell from a great height, and came gyrating down like a moulting feather from a sea-bird's wing. Falling into the whirl of tossing foam, it

floated upon the mass of wreckage like a golden flame, wind-blown here and there.

Captain Forbes hailed the boat alongside, and bade the officer pull to the spot, and bring the attractive fabric to the ship.

During the action, all on board the steamer had noticed the daring woman who kept the deck in spite of the imminent danger. Sometimes the beautiful creature stood quietly by the helmsman, at other times she took a position in the companion-way. Whether she was a religious zealot engaged in prayer for the general safety, or remained up to witness the battle, was in dispute on the Barracuda.

Greatly to the surprise of all she remained at her post to the last, watching the terrible hand-to-hand tussle going on with the boarders. Few could conceive, even at the last, that she, a woman, was presiding over the desperate conflict, as peerless as Bellona of old.

Aloata's calm display of courage had won the admiration of all on board, and when the flame-colored remnant of her dress was seen falling from aloft, as though flung down in derision from the upper world, — a delicate satin-striped pena, scattered with gold stars, — all watched with interest to see it fall, and were glad when the boat pulled through the whirling waters to secure it.

The muzzle of many a gun had been pointed a little more forward, during the fight, to avoid endangering a creature so brave and beautiful. Though it was believed, at the last, that she was really presiding over this most stubborn piece of broadside fighting known in the annals of practical warfare.

Thus, when the heaven-sent remnant of her dress was brought on board, each of the few remaining officers contemplated obtaining a piece, as a war-trophy to commemorate the terrible battle, a memento of the brave woman's heroism.

Just as Captain Forbes was about to tear up the remnant and divide it among the officers, an appealing voice stayed his hand. Rallying from his faint, Lawrence made his appearance on deck. Coming from behind the group, he was unobserved until he spoke. He had recognized Aloata's dress, and, seeing what they were about to do, he rushed among them, exclaiming, —

"Forbear, gentlemen! I pray you, give me that trophy, it belonged to a dear friend. Tell me quickly, is she saved?"

The remnant was given him, and he folded the tattered strip tenderly, looking about him with an anguished expression for the body of Aloata. Captain Forbes replied to him, —

"Not a soul has been saved but yourself. Who was that beautiful creature who remained up through the thickest of the fight? — caring as little about cannon shot as another might care for falling rain."

"It was Aloata, the young Queen of Gular. The kindest, bravest, most beautiful of her sex. It was she who blew up the vessel, with her own hands; doing it as calmly as she fought the battle; giving me, her prisoner, *thirty seconds* to escape by swimming. She had saved my life many times, and was in the act of taking me to her pirate isle, when you appeared, and drew on the fight. Never shall I behold her like again. Are

you sure that her body is not among the floating rubbish ?"

"I think not. Mr. Ringold, take your glass and go to the mast-head, where you can overlook all, and report what you see."

"I will thank you all, gentlemen, for any attention of like nature you can bestow. I will give a thousand pounds to secure her body. She is dearer to me than I can tell. I would mount the rigging myself, but my head is still in a whirl of confusion, for I believe I have been stunned."

"But how did you save yourself, Captain Lawrence, 'midst such general destruction ?"

"By leaping from the transom window, when that brave woman was about applying the torch to the magazine."

Mr. Ringold reported from aloft that nothing like the body they sought could be seen.

This report had a bad effect upon Lawrence. All grew black about him, and he reeled ready to fall. Captain Forbes ordered him taken to a stateroom in his own cabin, where he remained for the rest of the day.

Every attention was now given to repairing the steamer. One of her four boilers had exploded, and the steam-chest of one of her double engines was smashed.

The vessel was careened so as to more thoroughly plug her shot-holes from without, over which sheets of tarred canvas and copper were nailed. One of her compartments was half full of water; but the fire-room remained uninjured, and when the remaining engine was started up, the compartment was soon pumped out.

Late in the evening the vessel was in condition to make sail, and start on her course with moderate steam. She was headed for Hong Kong, and steered to pass to the south of the Pratas.

On the following day a plank cover was fitted to the steam-chest, then the second engine was connected to the shaft, which enabled them to push on under a fair head of steam.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

WRECK OF THE GREYHOUND.

THE fourth day after the battle found the Barracuda within a hundred miles of Hong Kong. The day was fine and the sea smooth. The steamer had passed the Pratas during the night, and would sight the Nine-pins at early dawn.

While Lawrence lay reclined upon the sofa in the after cabin, conversing with Captain Forbes about his adventures on the Arsi, there came a hail from the mast-head lookout, which at once attracted their attention. Something of unusual interest had been discovered from aloft.

After listening for a moment, Forbes excused himself and went on deck to learn what was seen. Hearing nothing more for a time, and noting by the tell-tale compass over his head that the ship's course was not changed, Lawrence dropped into a doze where he lay; as the nerve-shock caused by the explosion had left him in a lethargic condition.

While between sleeping and waking, Lawrence got the impression that the steamer gradually slowed down, and finally came to a complete stop. The effect upon a somnolent person was similar to a mild narcotic, and the sleeper soon sank into profound slumber; leaving him wholly unaware that a boat and crew had been picked

up, and that the steamer wore around and put back on a retrograde course.

Much more did the happy sleeper fail to learn. News, to which all his previous sad, sorrowful experience was as naught. The rescued boat contained the second mate and four seamen from the wrecked ship Greyhound; the unfortunate vessel whereon the Earl of St. Clare and his beautiful daughter had taken passage from Hong Kong.

The Greyhound, which was supposed to be half way on her homeward passage to England, was lying a complete wreck on the dread Pratas Shoal. Most of her crew were drowned when the vessel struck, and her passengers, who survived the wreck, had long since died from starvation; so reported the officer who was the last to abandon the shattered ship.

The boat's crew were five days out from the Shoal, and had been working their way back to Hong Kong. Four other persons were left on the bare rocky island of Pratas, including Captain Royal and the boatswain, both of whom were suffering from broken limbs.

This disaster would be terrible news to Lawrence. And the kind-hearted Forbes dreaded to break the sad tidings to him. It was finally agreed to let the rescued mate tell his story to Captain Lawrence, calling the ship by some other name for the time being, giving Lawrence another day in which to rally from his recent shock.

Captain Forbes went down to wake the sleeper, saying, as Lawrence aroused to consciousness, —

"We've picked up a boat belonging to a vessel wrecked on the Pratas."

"What ship?" asked the half-awake man, rubbing his eyes.

"The Eagle of Liverpool. Would you like to see the officer, and hear his story?"

"Yes, thank you, Captain. Where is he?"

"He's lunching in the ward-room now. We'll have him in, soon as he finishes refreshments." Touching the bell-call, the first steward appeared. "Steward, show down the wrecked officer when he gets through eating."

"Yes, sir."

"Captain Lawrence, are you familiar with these terrible shoals?"

"Ah, yes. I know them well. A friend of mine, Captain Robert Holmes, of the Living Age, was wrecked on the Pratas. As noble a fellow as ever sailed a ship. He was coming down from Shanghai, homeward bound, with a rich cargo of silks and teas. The vessel was running in a gale at night, five days from port. Mrs. Holmes was with him, and a tough time they had of it; fifty-five days on the reef. It seemed to be a fault of the strong westerly current. Robert had kept the deck the best part of the night, and thought he was well clear of the shoal; but about four bells in the morning watch she struck on the northeast side of the reef. The masts went by the board, and every boat was swept away by the first breaker."

"I remember about that wreck. The Barracuda was sent to the rescue, but the steamer Shanghai, from Manila, took them off. — Ah, here comes the wrecked officer. Captain Lawrence, this is Mr. Howland — the officer I spoke of. Draw up a seat near the sofa, Howland; the

Captain wishes to hear about your disaster on the ship Eagle."

"Yes, sir. A tough yarn you'll find it, Cap'n. I'm an old sea-dog — forty year, man an' boy — an' I speak from 'sperience. This 'ere am the toughest piece o' wrecking out o' five I've underwent. Howsumever, I 'spose I'm good for five more on um, if so I'm booked for it in the Log Book aloft."

"Where did you sail from, and how were you wrecked? Tell us the whole story, Mr. Howland."

"Well, Cap'n, I'll teld yer. We took aboard our cargo at Wampoa, came down the river, cleared and recruited at Hong Kong. We left port last March, when that pesky typhoon wuz brewin'. Took our departure from the Ninepins, and shaped our course down the sea wid a leadin' wind. But it breezed up fast, an' 'fore night it piped on to the durndest gale Bob Howland ever bowsed out ar weather earing to. But we reefed down to snug sail, an' the gale bein' aft, we'd nuthin' to do but pick our course to the suthard.

"It wuzen't long 'fore our fair wind give us ar bat in the face. It shifted an' struck us aback; an' we braced up an' headed to the east'ard. That brought the Pratas ahead on us. But it wuz the Cap'n's calkerlation to head round west arter nightfall.

"At dark the gale wuz hummin' wus than ever. We wore round an' headed west-nor'west, which give us a clear drift, wid no danger ahead. 'Bout an hour arter the gale whipped out west, an' let fly its durndest. The ship's head lay to the north, an' our drift would take us clear uv the Pratas, so we felt easy.

"We then lay under close-reefed fore an' main tops'ils, wid topmast stays'il. 'Bout midnight, when the typhoon gut really to work, it split the stays'l fust pop. An' 'bout an hour arter, away went the foretops'il clean out o' the bolt rope, wid the bang uv ar thirty-two pounder.

"The ship lay like ar duck, wid her lee-rail under water, an' the lower yards dippin' in the lurches. But the gale blew pesky hard in the squalls, an' grad'ally hauled to the nor'ard, till the ship wuz makin' ar dead drift onter the infernal Pratas. We wuz now in ar quandulum, you see. The cap'n, mate, an' I had lashed ourselves to the belay-pins under the hurricane house, an' each on us gin in our dead reckonin'. Our calkerlations all agreed that we wuz durned near the Shoals. The gale wuz then blowin' the wust it had done. It tore up the sea tops inter milk-white fiddle-strings. It blew so that I couldn't bite off a good breath fur half an' hour. We wuz all cooped up under the weather rail an' hurricane house, wid ar clear sheet uv foam roofed over us.

"The wind had now veered nor'east. We wuz headin' southeast, wid the old sea-way bumpin' agin our stern like ar earthquake. This was drivin' us straight onter the Pratas. An' we could on'y ax the Lord to help us. The night was black as ink, an' the roar uv wind an waves wuz deafenin'. I kind o' wished we had ar parson aboard to pray the gale down ar peg or two. But parsons is fine-weather birds, an' they's never where you want um.

"The question now wuz, where am the Pratas? But the on'y answer wuz the roar uv the seas an' howl uv

the wind. In such inky blackness there wuz no tellin' ar billow frum ar breaker. We could on'y know the Shoals by the thump uv our keel when we struck um.

"'Bout four bells in ther mornin'-watch we all felt a new, strange motion take ar hold uv the ship. She wuz caught up by the biggest kind uv comber, swung off 'fore the wind, and hurled for'ard like all possessed. Sum tremenjous power had seized the ship, righted her to an even keel, an' shook her till she trembled like ar skeered human.

"The black night wuz suddenly lit up like ar volcanic eruption. The sea tops wuz all aflame wid phosphorus flashes, dazzlin' ez the kitchin fire o' Satan. Where the light cum frum no feller could tell. Up aloft remained black ez ebony, an' the niggerish scud flew so low that it tore itself to tatters agin the swayin' masts an' rollin' yards.

"Ev'ry face I looked inter wuz white an' horrow-struck. I wiggled about in my wet lashin' an' put my mouth to the Cap'n's ear an' shouted, 'That's surf!'"

"'God forbid,' sez he, lookin' whiter than ever.

"'It's surf!' I yelled agin. 'I've bin in it 'fore now.' An' so it wuz. Two monstrous forty-foot breakers had clutched the ship in a strong grip, one for'ard an' one aft, an' she had not touched bottom, though the jagged reef-bed wuz of'en laid bare in the deep trough uv the rollers down under our keel. It wuz the friction uv the surf agin the juttin' coral that made the phosphorus flame an' flash like heat lightnin' in a summer sky.

"We spun along 'bout five miles on them two breakers quicker'n you could think. Then the for'ard breaker

slid out frum under the ship, and the bows plunged down inter the deep trough, an' struck agin a big, black rock, that shattered ther bottom, an' carried away the fore an' main masts by the board, leavin' nuthin' but the mizzen-mast standin' whole to the top. The minute the ship brought up, the surf rolled over us like ar cataract. Ten men went overboard wid the galley, the launch, an' every boat on the cranes.

"The next roller picked us up, an' toted the ship 'nother half-mile. There she planted herself fur good, 'mong ar bed uv sharp rocks that pierced her bottom, an' held her fast. She soon broached to, an' careened over on her beam ends; then the surf broke over us, till we wuz ez much under water ez fishes. Every comber smashed in piece after piece of main rail an' bulwarks, till there wuz none left for'ard of the mizzen riggin'. One man arter 'nother gin out, an' wuz washed from his lashings an' lost, till there wuzen't but three on us left under the hurricane house, the cap'n, boson, an' Bob Howland.

"'Bout that time the bows stove up sum more, an' settled down under water. This had the effect to lift the stern nearly out of reach uv the surf. When day dawned, it broke upon three sad-lookin' critters an' ez desolate a scene ez the eye ever looked upon. The typhoon had done its work, an' passed, leavin' a heavy gale blowin' that lasted five days longer. The mess of black rocks to the suth'ard, called a island, wuz 'bout half a mile off under our lee. The ship lay nearly a mile frum the western edge uv the surf, an' 'bout two miles frum smooth water at the south.

"Other wrecks lay 'bout us in every direction. Most on um wuz old hulks, junks an' sich like, wid nuthin' but bare black ribs, stems, an' stern-posts showin' 'bove water. Some uv the wrecks wuz good teak-built vessels, craft that showed their strength by withstanding the breakers fur years. To the southeast uv the island lay a full-rigged Indiaman, high an' dry on the rocks. That ship proved to be the Thomas Chadwick.

"At that time we s'posed the passengers wuz ground to powder, ez the starboard counter uv the ship had been badly stoven when we fust struck, an' the cabin must have bin full uv water ever since. We three survivors hung on fur six hours more, wet, cold, an' starvin'. The rough rope-lashings had sawed through our clothes, an' wuz cuttin' inter the raw flesh every time the ship rolled, or a sea thundered down upon our heads. We should die by inches if we did not shift our quarters, for we wuz fast bein' cut in two.

"Since the passengers wuz sent below, the cabin gangway had bin closely covered wid a taupolin. Cap'n R'yal an' I concluded to make fur the companion-way, an' git below, or die tryin'. I bein' the strongest went fust so ez to help the others. I timed it 'tween the biggest breakers, cut my rope, and slid down the wet deck to the mizzen-mast, holdin' on to the lee fife-rail waitin' for the cap'n. But he an' the boson waited too long. Bein' weak, they made a big job uv cuttin' the lashings. The surf took 'em ez they slipped their fasts, an' swept 'em overboard. The cap'n caught on to the mizzen-topmast, which floated alee, an' when the spar broke adrift, he drifted ashore an' wuz saved. The boson struck agin

a stanchion an' broke his legs, an', ez the poor feller couldn't swim, he nearly drownded, jest outer reach uv Cap'n R'yal, but wuz finally drifted ashore.

"Seein' I wuz left alone to do or die, I ripped open the lee-side uv the taupolin, opened the gangway an' crawled down the dark stairway. The water wuz swashin' 'bout the foot uv the stairs knee-deep. There seemed to be ez much water below ez above. But still-water wuz ar interestin' variety, ef it wuz deep. I waded through the entry into the cabin, spectin' to see the dead passengers floatin' 'bout sumwhere.

"The for'ard cabin wuz under water, an' the after cabin wuz full uv trunks, tables, cheers, an' floatin' garments b'longin' to the wimmin. I poked at the heaps uv clothes widout findin' ar dead un. Ez the ship lay heeled aport, the weather staterooms wuz dry nearly to the deck; but the larboard staterooms wuz two-thirds full uv water.

"Wadin' in up to the armpits, I reached the pantry, ravenous to git a bite uv suthin' to eat. But lookin' inter the cap'n's stateroom, which jined the pantry, there sat the gals on a chist, twinin' 'bout one 'nother like two lilies in a frog-pond. Both uv the pretty critters wuz water-soaked ez seaweed, an' one on um wuz prayin' fur deliverance that would never cum. For the ship wuz then poundin' like mad, an' seemed like to go to pieces wid every thump.

"The old gent wuz not to be seen in any uv the starboard rooms. I axed the gals where he wuz. They p'inted down to the mate's stateroom, an' begged me to see ef he wuz alive, for they wuz helpless ez mewin' kittens. But I gut a snack of somethin' to eat, 'fore

huntin' up a dead man, for I wuz most starved, not havin' had ar mouthful for two days. Arter lunch, I swum down to leeward, found the mate's berth full uv water, an' there lay the old Earl wid several ribs an' an arm broken" —

"The Earl! who, sir?" demanded Lawrence, springing up from the sofa with clinched hands, and wild horror fixed upon his face.

Howland turned to Captain Forbes, seeking a cue for his reply.

"Tell him all now, Mr. Howland."

"'Twuz the Earl uv St. Clare, sir. An' the ship wuz the Greyhound, uv London, Cap'n R'yal."

"Great God! and is she dead? Is Lady Seymour no more?"

"If you'll keep quiet, Cap'n, I'll tell ye the whole yarn, straight to the end."

"End, sir! I care nothing about the end. Tell me at once, is Lady Seymour dead?"

"Dead, sir, an' chawed up by a shark ez big ez ar jolly-boat. That's the most I can tell ye, wid present knowledge."

With rapid strides Lawrence walked the cabin deck with bowed head and fluted forehead, his eyes fierce and bloodshot, and his breathing labored and oppressed. The heavenly Father had deliberately snatched from him the fairest and best of her sex. In the present dazed condition of his brain the effect was stunning, and in the frenzy of the moment he was overpowered by a wish to curse life, and die.

For ten minutes he paced the deck without a word be-

ing spoken by any one. Such agony as it is possible for a strong man to suffer, Lawrence endured. At length he stopped before the old officer, haggard and aged as though an avalanche of years had rolled over him, and asked in a calm, sad, beseeching voice, hoarse and husky as one speaking from the grave, —

"Howland, is there the remotest possibility that all are not dead on board the Greyhound — that She may yet be alive?"

"Not the least hope, ez I calkerlate. But you'd better hear all I hev to say, an' then jedge for yourself, Cap'n."

"Go on, sir. Give me every detail of the final disaster, and don't stray from your subject a hair's breadth."

"Well, ez I wuz sayin', the Earl lay swashin' 'bout in the mate's berth, too much stoven up to help himself. He gut pitched out of his bunk when the ship struck, an' had jest strength 'nough to swim inter the mate's. Ez the bunks in the starboard staterooms wuz dry, I floated the table down to leeward an' lugged the old gent onter it, then swum him across to cap'n's room, where the gals wuz.

"The table legs grounded on the cabin floor 'fore we reached the stateroom — ez 'twuz a deep craft for a small one — so I had to tote the water-soaked man in my arms the rest uv the way. Takin' off most uv his wet clothes, we wrapped him in dry blankets an' put him in Cap'n R'yal's bunk, ez it wuz ar swingin' berth — allus right side up. I then persuaded the gals to climb inter their own bunks, where they could keep dry an' get ar snooze. For the ship had got well grounded on the rocks, an' wuz more easy, on'y tremblin' an' groanin' like ar sick human.

"It wuz then comin' on night. So I gut a bit more to eat from the pantry, ez I'd fasted long 'nough to kill ar dromedary. I couldn't induce either the Earl or wimmin to take ar bite. The gal sed suthin' 'bout takin' their next meal in t'other world. But I hadn't quite done wid this world yit, so I tucked in the grub. Wreckin' seemed ruther serious bizness to them wimmin, an' they wuz bent on coaxin' the Lord to save um. But I knowed the Lord had other fish to fry, for I'd seed it tried on 'fore then, an' no good cum uv it.

"I took possession uv the Earl's stateroom, — the after bunk uv all, — wrung out my clothes, an' saved the wet 'baccy in my pocket, which wuz all turned to leaf agin. Then Bob Howland turned in an' slept till mornin'. My notion was, ef I'd gut to be drownded, the sea-spooks needn't be partic'lar 'bout wakin' me up to do 't. 'Cause I knowed where I's booked fur, an' thought I'd wake up when the little imps uv Satan wuz dryin' my clothes.

"The sun came out bright next day, an' the wind settled inter a clear westerly gale. I set to work an' spliced the Earl's arm the best I could, an' rigged up a scotchman to support it. The old gent was cool ez a cowcumber, an' helped the new surgeon to do it. Several times during the day I paddled round to the gangway on the cabin table, an' went on deck to survey the prospec'. The ship still held hard an' fast where she struck. 'Tween her an' the rocky island rolled the heaviest surf on the Pratas. It wuz possible for a raft to reach the leeward rocks, but not even a South-Sea islander could surmount the breakers an' reach the wreck.

"I counted eight uv the wrecked crew on the rocks,

gathered round a big fire made uv drift wood. They had h'isted a shirt half-mast on a pole, ez a signal uv distress, to attract any passin' vessel. The poor fellers wuz starvin'. We had plenty uv food in the pantry for present use, an' I had coaxed the passingers to take refreshments now an' then, where they lay. But we had nuthin' to spare for the men on the rocks.

"The Greyhound continued to break up for'ard, grindin' off her bow 'mong the rocks; an' 'fore the gale blew over, she heeled a-starboard an' settled down still more by the head, liftin' her stern so high out uv water that the cabin floor wuz left dry; though tipped for'ard at such a awk'ard pitch that the wimmin couldn't climb up to their berths widout help. They spent part uv the day down in the Earl's room, while I wuz on deck prospectin'.

"When the gale blowed out, the surf ceased to break over the quarter; though two-thirds uv the ship wuz still under water. Ez the weather gut better, I fixed things in place; lashed the table, chists an' cheers, an' made all snug for housekeepin'. The ship's hold wuz full uv water. The main hatch had burst off, an' two casks uv bread wuz floatin' round 'tween the combings. My heart beat a tattoo when I seed 'em. We needed one, an' the shore folks might be saved wid the other.

"The mizzen tops'il halyards wuz washin' 'bout the lee quarter, with the lower block hooked to an eye-bolt in the waterway. I pulled um aboard, an' rigged the tackle to the mizzen top. Then I gut a parbuckle round one uv the casks uv pilot-bread, an' wid the help uv the wimmin I drew it up to the after hatchway, an' lowered it inter the steerage for cabin stores. The other cask I

gut out an' drifted ashore, for the starvin' crew; an' they danced an' swung their hats arter they secured it.

"Arter weeks uv labor an' much hard tuggin', I completed a small raft frum planks an' stuns'il booms. At the end of a month's work it wuz re'dy to launch, an' we could take our chances uv driftin' ashore. But the Earl wuz still sick in his bunk, an' the wimmin wouldn't leave him. So, ez the grub wuz gettin' moughty scarse, I teld em I must go ashore. I explained that bein' a carpenter I could p'r'aps rig up a boat an' go for help. They seed how it wuz, an' arter sum protests an' snivelin' they 'greed to it, though they didn't seem to like keepin' house widout a skipper.

"Waitin' for a calm day, I bid good-by to the folks, an' shoved off frum the wreck. My clumsy craft wuz hard to manage, an' soon dropped astarn, down the back uv a breaker inter the trough. The next comber rolled over the raft an' sent me hummin' like a top. I swallered 'bout a barrel uv water, an' fore I could unload the pesky stuff a big shark made a grab at my legs, took a piece uv my trowsers, an' nearly sp'iled my sea-goin' quality. My raft an' I gut ashore, but it rolled over a dozen times in the passage, an' I wuz badly smashed on the rocks in landin'. The crew on the rocks was livin' on rats an' lizards, an' they blamed me for not driftin' ashore more bread frum the wreck.

"What happened on the Greyhound arter I left, I can't tell. Long fust of't, the gals run the signal up an' down at the peak, ez I teld 'em. But arter a while the signals ceased, an' the flag wuz left at the gaff till it blew to tatters. We worked away many weeks at the

broken boat, for, havin' nothin' to work with, the repairin' went on slowly.

"Two weeks ago we caught a big ground shark, wid nine rows uv teeth, an' a mouth large 'nough to gulp down a man. We found in his stomach part uv one gal's body, an' the arm uv t'other one. The arm uv the Earl's daughter wuz bit off at the elbow, an' had a diamond bracelet on it, marked wid the leddy's name. It was cur'ous how the shark got at them gals. Likely they tumbled inter the open scuttle in the cabin floor, where I caught my fish, an' now an' then hooked up some uv the cabin stores.

"With the help of the crew I gut the boat re'dy at last, and started for Hong Kong. When I left Pratas four days ago, the Greyhound remained fast in her rocky moorings. She'll break up sometime, an' what's left uv her cargo will drift away. There'd been no signs of life aboard uv her for many weeks. We knowed that two uv her passengers wuz dead for sartin, an' we calkerlated that the old Earl wuz starved long ago.

"That's all I can tell yer 'bout 'em, Cap'n, an' Bob Howland duzn't think it's wuth while to tinker 'round that old wreck, for it's all gammon 'bout there being a live thing aboard uv her."

For some minutes the three men remained silent as the grave; then Forbes broke the agonizing spell by asking, —

"Would you like to ask Howland any more questions, Captain Lawrence?"

"No, thank you. This man's inhumanity has shocked me. It was a foul wrong to leave those helpless people on the wreck, and it has probably ended as he says.

But of course you will go back to the wrecked crew; and I shall find a way to get to the wreck if I live."

Howland made an attempt to defend his doings, but Lawrence frowned upon him, and made an indignant gesture for him to be gone.

"Certainly, I shall go back to the island," replied Forbes, "we are steaming back now at top speed. — Nothing more now, Mr. Howland. Go up and ask the lieutenant to assign you quarters in the ward room."

CHAPTER XXIX.

THE PRATAS SHOAL.

THE moment Howland left the cabin, Captain Forbes came across and grasped Lawrence's hand with a generous outburst of brotherly love. With tears streaming down his cheeks, he sought to show his sympathy, and in some measure to assuage the terrible grief-shock which had fallen upon his guest.

"I know that words can do little to appease your sorrow, but I cannot leave you in doubt that my heart aches for you at this irreparable loss. I do not see how I can be of use to you in this matter; but, to show my good will, I hereby put myself at your command, and I know your good friend the Admiral will bear me out in so doing."

"God bless you, Forbes! for your sympathy and this generous offer of services. I don't know what I want just yet. I can never endure the sight of that man again; the thought of him makes me frantic."

"I join with you in condemning Howland's brutality, in abandoning those helpless creatures to save his own worthless life. He is an exceptional sailor, for there is not one in a thousand so heartless."

"What is your present plan of action?"

"I hardly know, beyond running in to the island and taking off the men. If the night holds clear we shall be

near the Pratas by morning, where we can find passable anchorage at this season of the year in the lagoon. Then we must make our plans to reach the wreck the best we can. I should like to hear any suggestions you wish to make. Your experience has been so varied that you will be more apt to hit upon a feasible plan than I shall."

"It is impossible, I suppose, to think of heading a boat into such a surf as Howland describes, between the wreck and island; and I know from my own remembrance that he does not exaggerate much, if any. Nothing can be done with boats in any direction, especially such boats as the Barracuda has; and, even with whaleboats, the best in the world for the purpose, I should rather take the chance from the windward than from the island side."

"But," queried Forbes, "the wreck lies five miles away from the northern edge of the reef. I question if the best boat ever built can run over such a long line of breakers."

"True, it is dangerous and difficult; but it must be done, and it lies with us to choose the best plan."

"But, Captain, is any plan possible?"

"That remains to be tested. If no better method offers, I shall attempt it on a surfboard," persisted the indomitable Lawrence.

"Have you had experience with that kind of craft?"

"Only for the fun of the thing, in the much smaller surf at Hawaii. But the plan grows quickly upon me, and I have already made up my mind to undertake it. I think I will succeed."

"It seems to me like throwing away your life, to undertake such a project."

"But this plan will involve no other life but mine. I think it feasible, and have fully made up my mind to undertake it. Will you let the ship's carpenter work me out a surfboard from one of his widest pine planks; sharp at both ends and brought to thin edges on the sides?"

"Certainly. But hadn't you better make your draft of what you require, before I call him down. A thing which a man means to risk his life upon, requires his best thought in planning, as well as skill in construction."

"True, but my best thoughts always come first, and subsequent ones are usually of secondary value. Other plans crowd upon my mind, but none seem so manageable. A raft built upon four empty casks would ride the surf, but cannot be guided or kept upon the crest of the roller. A surfboard can be deviated considerably from a right line of sailing, although one rides all the distance upon one roller."

"It will be the most perilous undertaking I ever witnessed. We have a Kanaka on board; don't they make use of the undertow to swim under such surf as lies between the island and the wreck?"

"Yes, but that is not feasible in this case, for the bottom is full of projecting rocks. A surf-swimmer must have sand or pebble bottom to make use of the undertow. I have practiced surf-riding enough to know that it only requires courage and confidence, a quick eye and a steady hand to execute the wants of the moment."

"God grant that you may succeed. One who even dares such an undertaking starts with the best elements of success; but I shudder at the peril you will encounter. Suppose you live to reach the wreck, how can you ever get any one ashore on a surfboard?"

"Ah! my dear Forbes, if she were only alive upon that wreck, I would build her a bridge of gold upon which to walk dry-footed to the land. But if Lady Seymour is dead, as we suppose, it is a matter of no importance whether I remain upon the wreck, or drown in some futile attempt to pass to the shore."

"What signals shall we agree upon if you find any one alive?" continued Forbes, keeping to the practical side of the question.

"I will hoist some simple signal to announce my safe arrival, if I am not wounded when thrown upon the wreck. If the Earl is alive, I will hoist two signals. And — dare I say more — if by any possibility that dearer one is spared to me, O Almighty Father! you will know it, Forbes, unquestionably, by the signals I will make."

"I hope in Heaven's name you may succeed in reaching the wreck; it will be such a satisfaction to stand where she has stood, and bring away something of hers to pleasure your memory throughout life. But hope of finding any one alive, especially her, is something you must not build upon; unless you would add another wreck to that now lying on the Pratas. Let us hope that fellow Howland has made the whole matter worse than it is, to deter our searching the wreck."

"God bless you for that thought, Forbes! It is an

idea of mine own, but I dared not give it voice. Here is my draught for the surfboard; will you permit the steward to call down the carpenter?"

"Steward! send Chips down, at once."

"Ay, ay, sir!"

When the carpenter presented himself, Lawrence explained his draught of a large sized surfboard. Chips was ordered to make the little craft as buoyant as possible. This could be done by boring numerous auger-holes from side to side, along two-thirds of its length, forward; the holes were to be plugged up at the ends, leaving so many small air-chambers to elevate the front end of the float. It was believed that this method of buoyance would make a craft equal to a native surfboard made from the cabbage tree.

The carpenter was an ingenious man, and took in the whole conception at a glance. He had some seasoned white-pine plank of the desired thickness, of four inches, and any length required; so the work was begun at once.

One other thoughtful suggestion was made by which to provision the tiny craft. Four of the more central air chambers were fitted with cork stoppers, wherein were to be stored brandy, wine, water, and provision. Rope beckets were secured to the bow and stern, and two upon each side of the body of the surfboard, by which to hold on or secure anything.

A light, strong, two-bladed paddle was made from the loom of a large oar; which, together with the surfboard, was to be well varnished with two coats of shellac, and thoroughly dried in the engine-room.

The carpenter and one of his gang left their repairs upon the shot-holes made by the pirate, and went at the little Prata — as the new craft was christened — with such good will that the whole thing was completed by night; and before morning the two coats of shellac-varnish were well dried. When put overboard by a tow-rope, while the steamer lay-to waiting for daylight, the Prata was found to float as light as a cork, with the forward end reared wholly out of water by its numerous air-chambers. This was as it should be, so the craft could not plunge under and slip away from its occupant in the wild fury of the surf.

Morning found the Barracuda off the southwest point of the Pratas Shoal; the small rocky island being about four miles away, around the south point of the breakers. Lawrence and Captain Forbes took the spy-glasses and mounted aloft into the mizzen-top to make their observations, while the steamer ran into her anchorage.

The Greyhound was discovered in the exact position described by Howland, pitched head-foremost at an angle of twenty degrees. The ship's bows were wholly submerged, showing only a few feet of the broken fore-mast and the bowsprit-cap occasionally in the deep hollow of the breakers. The stern was elevated so high out of water that the stern-post and heel of the rudder were left bare in the trough of the rollers, which also disclosed the cradle of black rocks in which the ship was embedded. The conformation of these rocks was such that the wreck was somewhat careened to the northward. This heeled condition left the deck fairly open to the inrolling surf, which dashed in on deck and ran aft as

high as the booby hatch ; while only the highest breakers reached the cabin gangway.

The mizzen-mast was the only whole spar that remained standing; this was unharmed to its top, the shrouds being still left intact. The spanker boom was gone, but the gaff and spanker remained, the only sail left on the ship. The splintered stump of the mainmast was visible twenty feet above the seething foam. Beyond this, the quarter-deck was swept clear of everything but the capstan, hurricane-house, companion-way, binnacle, and broken wheel ; the latter being kept in constant action by the tops of the breakers, which struck against the lower part of the rudder.

The bare stanchions, everywhere forward of the mizzen rigging, were wholly bereft of main-rail and bulwarks, and where their tops were seen emerging from the foaming waters they seemed verily like the uplifted arms of drowning men appealing for aid. It was truly a desolate picture of a once strong and beautiful ship that had succumbed after a desperate battle against wind and waves.

Long and earnestly the two captains in the Barracuda's mizzen-top examined the wreck, directing their glasses everywhere with closest scrutiny, without discovering the least intimation of life anywhere. Both men shrunk from giving voice to the utter hopelessness instilled into the mind of each.

Lawrence was the first to give vent to a sad, heart-breaking sigh ; a burdensome effort of nature in distress, as ominous to the friendly ear as the last gasp of the dying. Forbes could withhold his pent-up words of con-

solation no longer. The two men withdrew their telescopes and looked solemnly into each other's faces, the fast gathering tears flowing from their eyes, and their voices choked with emotion; from contemplating such a cruel death for the grand old Earl and his beautiful daughter. Forbes was the first to speak, —

"Captain Lawrence, I wish I could see the faintest ray of hope to impart to you. It is even worse than Howland represented. It is utterly impossible to reach the wreck. And, if you could, you would find but a charnel-house robbed of its dead."

"Yes, it is as solitary as a graveyard aboard there. But if God spares my life I will devote the last remnant of existence in trying to reach the wreck, and learn the worst."

"How can you cast away your life in such a hopeless endeavor?"

"Forbes, I have such an unutterable longing to secure something that once belonged to her that it has now become my only object in life."

"But, my dear fellow, your sea experience should teach you the impossibility of reaching the wreck, out in the midst of such a stupendous surf."

"It may be so. But my experience has taught me, 'Where there's a will there's a way.' So you must not dissuade me from trying. At present, I am confronted with something worse than those breakers. Tell me, if you know, how can I ever be reconciled to this cruel disaster, which you term the Providence of God? Think of such a prolonged torture being inflicted upon the brightest and best of God's handiwork."

"She was indeed all you claim for her, — much too good for human affection. But the Divine hand has taken her home, and it is not for us to rebel."

"I tell you, Forbes, that this life is but a curse at the best. It grows a cruel mystery to me the longer I live. Two such noble women as I have seen snatched from existence by twin horrors: yonder wreck and the explosion of the Arsi."

"I admit that it is a cruel fate, very hard to endure; but the Father's ways are not our ways, and we must submit with the best grace we can, knowing that in some unforeseen way the worst that can happen is for the best."

"Ah, Forbes, you cannot put yourself into my place, nor conceive what I suffer. I beg of you, dear friend, don't torture a half-crazed man into expressions of impatience or impiety by thrusting a single impediment in the way of my going to that wreck; for go I must and will, if all the world says nay."

"Captain, I feel for you more than you know, and I will endeavor to be patient and helpful as I would be to a brother." And the warm-hearted seaman caught Lawrence's hand, and held it fast in his own.

"Another favor I have to ask. When we go down to the cabin, prompt me to leave in your possession a package of valuables for my home friends. Forward it as directed by some safe method, without regard to expense."

"I will fulfil your every wish, my dear fellow."

"And, Forbes, if there is one spark of human sympathy left in your heart, do not permit a single effort to

be made in saving me should I not come ashore voluntarily. I feel now like cursing life and all its incentives to goodness, as so many snares to entice us into ambitious hopes that are never fulfilled."

"Why, Lawrence, you are the last person to rail in that fashion. Few men have accomplished so much at your age."

"True, I have had my proud triumphs, as you know. But, Forbes, all the rectitude which we call goodness, together with the social glitter imposed upon us by our successes, — which we misname happiness, — are as one shining grain of seashore sand compared to this day's sufferings."

"Forbear, forbear, my dear fellow. It is not best to nurse our grief in this manner."

"You argue like one floating on a tranquil sea. Like one who willfully shuts his eyes to the necessity of volcanic outlets, as a means of saving the original woof and warp of life. I have cultivated wisdom and virtue, and they have become as serpents in my path. I have sought to endow myself with noble qualities, yet this one day's torture has sufficed to belittle me in my own esteem past the wish to live."

"Oh, Captain, do try to calm yourself. You make my heart ache as if your grief were my own."

"I pray the overruling power that such grief may never be entailed upon another. Learn from my experience, Forbes, never to burden your lips with a prayer for life. Had I gone up in the explosion of the Arsi with Aloata, as she wished, what a hell of seething torture I should have escaped. Now there is no place

but the bottom of the sea for me, for no wing power in all the spirit land could lift my grief-laden soul from the earth."

"I will not chide you, Captain, as I am tempted to do, for harboring such bitterness in this sad hour. Neither do I believe that the heavenly Father will cut you off from his undying love, though you doubt and revile the justice and mercy of his divine Providence in the lives of men."

"You are kinder to me than I wish and deserve, for I am in the mood to covet the worst fate that can befall me."

"One word more, my good fellow. I would drop a little seed for fruitage into your lacerated heart, because of its ethereal beauty and the peaceful calm which sometimes grows out of it." With a look of almost fierceness shadowing his woe-begone face, Lawrence lifted his bloodshot eyes from the wreck to the sympathetic face of his companion, wondering what possible panacea could be in store for his bereavement. "Do you not know, dear friend, that such an ethereal spirit as Lady Seymour's would not harbor for an instant about yonder wreck? And where she is not, even in spirit, you would not wish to remain."

"Thank you for that precious thought, Captain. But there is another construction to put upon such a death scene, another aspect which fascinates me with yonder wreck. The place where such as she has lingered, suffered, and died, can never again be wholly devoid of the sweet presence of the departed."

"Tell me more clearly what you have in mind?"

"Well, admitting that Lady Seymour is dead and her spiritual essence has winged heavenward to its Maker, there to be recognized by the Father and embodied in the heavenly choir; yet, as true as I breathe and have the intelligence to know what I see, I behold her precious image in yonder surf-washed cabin at this moment. I pierce the deck-planking of the stranded ship as 'twere a flimsy veil, and see my Lucia everywhere; standing, sitting, kneeling in prayer; a pale, poor semblance of my darling; but, oh, a sufficient embodiment of Lady Lucia to draw me through fire and water to her side."

"Dear friend! I fear your brain has been overtaxed. Such delusions show that your reason has become unlimbered."

"Forbes, you have never loved and lost the best which the world contained; so I forgive you for the doubt you cast upon my mental balance. But, with the clearest reason that ever illuminated my brain, I know I shall find yonder cabin permeated with Lucia's latest thoughts of me. They have peopled that sacred wreck as no place else can ever be pervaded by her I so love, so revere! So I hold to my purpose of searching that wreck at any cost. And, feeling as I now do, I shall abide there while life lasts."

"My dear fellow, do not fear that I shall do anything to obstruct your wishes. I know how real your grief is, and the value of the treasure that you have lost. Not a word more will I say to dissuade you from a task so sacred; for I am strongly impressed that you will yet find a new light, a new revelation, if you seek it honestly and prayerfully, as I know you will. The steamer is

just ready to anchor. Let us go down and be ready to land."

Ten minutes later, the vessel had anchored, and the two captains were seated in the boat, on their way to the shore. A desolate-looking heap of rocks lay before them, without a semblance of vegetation to cheer the barren island. The wrecked men were eagerly awaiting the coming boat, with pinched, starved faces, which doubled their ghastliness by every attempt at joyous expressions, for every fiber of the laughter-muscles was obliterated.

Captain Royal and his boatswain came forward to greet the captains as they landed. Recognizing Lawrence, the unfortunate captain of the Greyhound sprang forward and wrung his hand with a true seaman's sympathy, and at once sought to exonerate himself from blame in the loss of his ship and passengers.

"Thank God! Captain Lawrence, it was by no fault of mine that I am here, and your dear ones are dead; else I could not meet you face to face, of all living men."

"I know it, Royal. I believe it in my inmost heart. Your mate, Howland, has told us the whole story in detail. You could not have done otherwise. Except, perhaps, you ought not to have sailed when a typhoon was brewing. But I have not a word to say now on that point."

"I thank you for your frankness; for, crushed as I already am, an ill word from you, who are so capable of judging, would kill me as sure as fate."

"Say no more, my good fellow, but let us come to another point at once, which is all-important with me.

Is there any chance of reaching the wreck from this direction?"

"Not the remotest. We lost three prime swimmers in trying to swim by the undertow."

"Can a boat live to ride down the long line of rollers to windward?"

"Not the best boat ever built! But you know more about boats and surf than I can tell you; for a whaler is the most practical boatman in the world."

"Is there no other way you can think of?"

"None whatever. Men dependent for months upon catching fish, rats, and birds, without proper appliances, when driven to eating seaweed in their extremity for food, have their wits sharpened by necessity; and none of us have yet conceived a way of reaching the old Greyhound."

"But she must be reached, and I am ready for any one's suggestions before trying my own plan."

"To any one else than you, Captain Lawrence, I would affirm that it is not worth the peril of trying. But to you — knowing your heart as I do — I say count on me for any plan or project you decide upon. As I will go where you lead, should it cost me my life."

"Thanks, Royal, I relish your robust sympathy, as a starving man clutches at food. But I shall call upon no one to risk anything for me. I am the one most personally interested in reaching the wreck, and I haven't the remotest doubt but I shall accomplish it."

"How under heavens can you do it?"

"I have a number of feasible plans, but shall first undertake the one requiring no man's aid. How far do

you estimate it is to the northern reef-edge, in the direct line of the surf ? "

"Five miles of furious, unbroken breakers; the largest surf that the world ever saw."

"That was about the estimate we made as we ran in with the steamer. — Have you time, Captain Forbes, to walk across to the point nearest the wreck, that I may examine for a landing ? "

"Oh, yes, take all the time you require, I'm at your service in this matter of reaching the wreck. First, I will send aboard the wrecked men, and then be at your command. Captain Royal, will you board the vessel now, or stay with us ? "

"I'll wait and return with you. Though I am hungry and cold, I may be of use in this matter, as I have studied the surf and sought the safest landing-place, which is dangerous at the best."

The three captains picked their way across the jagged rocks to the northern shore to examine what Royal designated as the best landing-place. It was a rough place, hideous with black, sharp rocks, that seemed especially adapted for piercing the bottom of ship or boat. As nothing like a suitable landing could be found, Lawrence suggested that an incline of planks could be built out over the jutting rock-points, and a signal-post erected to guide any one coming from the wreck ; as it was evident to all that a boat coming in on the top of a thirty-foot surf would be thrown with great force upon the shore.

Captain Forbes acquiesced in all Lawrence's suggestions. When the boat was seen returning for them, they

walked back to the southern shore of the lagoon, which made up some distance into the mass of rocks. After they arrived on board the Barracuda, Lawrence busied himself in making his final preparations for the morrow.

During the evening Captain Royal gave his version of the typhoon, and the manner in which the ship was wrecked. Before retiring for the night, he gave Lawrence the costly bracelet found upon Lady Seymour's arm. This precious relic again affected the lover with the mingled bitterness and grief which had so greatly agitated him in the morning.

CHAPTER XXX.

VOYAGE ON A SURFBOARD.

AT the earliest dawn, the boatswain's whistle was heard resounding through the steamer, calling out all hands to weigh anchor and steam around the Pratas to the north. A full head of steam had been got up long before daylight, as Captain Forbes wished to spend the whole day searching out the most suitable position for Lawrence to start upon his perilous adventure.

Five miles of gigantic surf was but one of the many difficulties which Lawrence had to contend with. The breakers ran across the reef-bed from north to south, passing through numerous clusters of jutting rocks which would greatly imperil the voyager. Yet the most uncertain element that he had to surmount was a strong westerly current which ran across the shoal at right angles to the breakers, and would bear his surfboard he knew not where. But for this treacherous drift, Lawrence could embark with the Greyhound bearing south, and the direct flow of the surf would take him to his destination. Just how much the current would carry him from his true course remained to be tested.

The courage and resolution displayed in this dangerous undertaking created an intense interest throughout the ship. So infectious is such unaffected daring in one of known courage and prudence that several of the

officers and many of the crew came to believe that the hero would accomplish the task, from sheer force of will-power, and an unusual skill to manage everything that he undertook. This subtle influence over the minds of men bespeaks an element of success wherever found in human enterprise.

After a night of restful sleep, Lawrence was aroused by the boatswain's pipe. When he awoke, he devoted a few minutes to prayer, before he set himself to prepare for the task of the day; he dressed in loose knit drawers and undershirt, with cloth sandals for his feet, and a well-padded Scotch cap upon his head. The leather belt about his waist contained two sheath-knives, one for each hand, to defend himself from sharks; for the Pratas is famous for these ravenous monsters, some of which are as big as a small whale.

By the time he had provisioned his surfboard, and otherwise prepared himself for his novel voyage, the steamer had skirted the treacherous reef and lay-to awaiting further instructions from the master-spirit of the hour. When he appeared on deck, Captains Forbes and Royal were standing with glasses in hand, looking with dismay upon the long line of unbroken breakers which rolled with indescribable fury in the direction of the wreck, then dimly visible through the mist of spray thrown off by the sea-tops.

After a cordial greeting between the three Captains, Forbes asked Lawrence what further commands he had to give, saying, —

"Here we are directly in the line of the wreck. How does the position suit you?"

"That must be determined by floating some casks over the breakers, by which to learn the strength of the current."

"The wreck now bears due south. Shall we send off a cask from here; or steam ahead, more to the eastward?"

"Throw one overboard here, and then steam ahead and drop over another with the wreck bearing south by west and still another at south-southwest. One of the three will probably give me the right starting-point."

"All right. Mr. Ringold, order away the first cutter, and tow one of the casks into the edge of the breakers. Then send Mr. Black to the mast-head to report what the western drift is, and on which side of the wreck the cask goes."

"Yes, sir, — Boson! pipe away the first cutter, to take a cask in tow. Send it as near in to the shoal as a boat can safely pull."

When the cutter returned, it was taken in tow, while the vessel steamed to the east till the wreck bore right to set another cask adrift; and so on with the third cask. This experiment proved of value, for it soon became evident that the set across the Pratas was much stronger than had been supposed. The first three casks were all carried wide of the mark, and passed to the west of the wreck. Again the experiment was made with the Greyhound bearing southwest. This position proved to be about right, as the point of departure for casks.

It still remained a nice point to decide just where Lawrence should start from. For the casks were exposed forty-five minutes to the current while going to the wreck; as they were delayed when dropped from one

roller before being picked up by another. While the surfboard should not exceed half an hour in making the passage, as Lawrence would be compelled to stick to the one breaker on which he embarked. Thus he would be exposed to the western drift fifteen minutes less time than the casks.

Acting upon these calculations, the Barracuda was steamed back to the west, until the wreck bore southwest by south. Then the cutter was hauled to the gangway, and, after shaking hands with the officers and receiving an affectionate good-by from the Captains, Lawrence sprang nimbly down the side of the vessel and took his seat in the boat. Going to certain death, as all feared, without showing a particle of hesitation in look or tone.

Lieutenant Ringold kindly took charge of the boat which bore Lawrence to the verge of the surf. The jaunty little Prata was taken in tow, and she frisked about at her tow-line like a lambkin at play. Lawrence was in the best of spirits, and expressed himself highly gratified with his buoyant craft, and the fair prospect of reaching the Greyhound. But for his joyous mood, the pull to the reef would have been a funeral procession; for the lieutenant was sad and silent, and the crew were awed at the sublime courage displayed by the hero.

Captains Forbes and Royal took their spy-glasses and climbed to the mizzen-top, neither having any doubt but they were to witness some sad disaster to their companion. The forward masts soon became crowded with the ship's people, all eager to watch this novel and daring piece of boat-work. A momentous contest between old Ocean at his grandest, and pygmy man single-handed;

wherein the prize was Life or Death — and twenty to one were wagered on the breakers, by the dismayed audience.

When the cutter had approached the great roaring surf as near as Ringold deemed prudent, the boat's way was checked by the oars, and the skittish little Prata was hauled alongside and steadied, while Lawrence embarked for the first trial of his pet craft. The surfboard proved as tottlish as a toy skiff, and required the utmost care while assuming a recumbent position on her deck.

But, when once fairly in possession of the unsteady thing, Lawrence was enabled to mount upon his knees or lie prone at his pleasure. After a little practice, he became expert in adapting himself to the desired position, seeking to trim the craft so that she would run nose out, and prevent burying. When a trifle by the stern, either a sled or a boat is most easily guided.

At length, with paddle in hand, he was ready to start. Exchanging the "lion's grip" of the hand with Ringold, amidst the fervent good-bys and God bless you from the crew, Lawrence shoved off, touched the water experimentally with the alternate blades of his slender, double-bladed oar, and spun the little Prata swiftly toward the mighty surf.

When quite near the reef, a single back stroke brought the frail craft to a stand, just where old Ocean began to ruffle himself into evident anger at finding a rocky obstruction athwart his path. There Lawrence remained just without the breakers, calmly waiting for three of the largest embryo combers to form, and carry him to victory or death. He had not long to wait. A dozen

inferior undulations passed, rose into thirty-foot rollers, and went on their way.

Then came three ominous-looking swells rolling in upon him, monsters that began to hump up their backs even before they touched the sunken edge of the reef. When the foremost swell reached the Prata, she started like a spurred courser. A double stroke of the paddle was sufficient hint to the alert craft. She clung to the uprising top of the undulation as a romping child clings to its parent, and was carried forward with the wave as it rose higher and higher, rolling upward and onward into a gigantic foam crest nearly forty feet high.

A long wild cheer came sweeping down over the intervening sea from the steamer's crew, which could not fail to lighten the brave heart on the flying surfboard, though his attention was too much occupied to respond. Only for a minute could the friendly shouts be heard by the fast receding recipient, for the commingled noise of many breakers was enough to drown a cannon's roar.

Lawrence soon acquired the position he sought on the dizzy surf-top of the mightiest comber of the far-famed Pratas Shoal. There he tossed and tumbled like a wind-blown bubble, yet skillfully held his tiny surfboard upon the downward curve of the foam crest. This required his constant watchfulness, and an occasional quick paddle-stroke on one side or the other, to keep the shying craft from evading the forward pitch of the hissing, seething surf.

One trembles while contemplating the impunity of man when thus bearding old Ocean's most relentless surf in his grandest lair, where the countless wrecks evince

that his power for harm is as destructive as an earthquake. When the onlookers aboard the steamer witnessed the peril which their companion had successfully encountered, the hand of God seemed to be in it, and they held their breath in suspense, so awed that respiration seemed a forgotten function. No wonder that the monsoon breezes became vibrant with inarticulate prayers for his safety, — prayers from weather-worn lips that had never trembled with invocations before.

Thus onward and upward rolled the colossal breaker which bore the Prata, ever increasing its height and quickening its speed, and never for an instant lowering its haughty front of boiling foam. Never since the world began was man placed in peril more grand and unique, where a brave heart could not fail to exult till naught but his garment's hem seemed linked to the racing seas or the habitable earth.

Fifteen minutes had passed in this wild Mazeppa ride, and the distance was half run. Gaining confidence in the management of his frail craft, though it seemed but a sea-washed bubble beneath his breast, — Lawrence ventured to look back towards the far-away vessel, seeking to estimate his position. A swift, brief glance was all he could give, as a swooping eagle turns his royal eyes to the sun. But one look sufficed to create dismay, for he discovered that the Prata was being swept to the westward of the wreck, which could then be seen far down over the snowy manes of the loping water steeds before him.

Now came the most consummate test of a boatman's skill. A perilous task wherein courage needs to be

wrought to a white heat, and neither eye nor hand must fail at the peril of life. The surfboard must not only be checked in her western drift, but she must also be literally swerved to the eastward. Time was brief; but it must be done, and done quickly, or the little Prata would be carried past the wreck, and the perilous effort have to be renewed. A trifle too much deviation across the forefront of the mad breaker and the furious surf would whirl the surfboard over and over, as a feather travels in a whirlwind.

With his keen eye alert to avoid upsetting, and his bold hand venturing to the utmost limit of peril in the artful use of his paddle-blade, Lawrence cunningly entered upon his dangerous task with the utmost nicety of perception. The supreme need of the moment was a clawing side-stroke aport, to steadily claw along the front of the breaker, sideways, to the east. This, with an occasional swift impelling stroke of the starboard blade, to hold the sidling craft upon the forward curve of the comber, was deemed work for an expert, on surf with half the grandeur and might of that described.

After ten minutes' stupendous labor, Lawrence joyfully approached the Greyhound, and brought the wreck fairly under his lee. Then arose the question how to land safely on the slippery planks of the surf-washed deck? The sunken bows of the vessel pointed to the southwest, and pitched down at an angle of twenty degrees. Her stern was lifted high into the air, well out of reach of the highest surf. The deck of the ship was greatly careened to starboard, sloping down to the water in the direction to receive the approaching surfboard.

Soon as the surf felt the influence of the submerged rocks under the Greyhound, it suddenly broke into a deafening roar, and lifted its gigantic crest into the air higher than ever; tossing its foam flakes like the froth of a frightened steed. For an instant the Prata was buried from view in the seething foam, and Lawrence was nearly drowned ere he emerged for breath.

This was but one of many new dangers that now confronted him. When his task seemed nearly ended, a cordon of splintered timbers barred his way and threatened certain destruction. But with a hand of iron and an eye of fire Lawrence steered his craft so as to shoot clear of the jutting stanchions, the stump of the mainmast, the capstan, and the open hatchway; and rode in upon his white-maned courser with a velocity that nearly deprived him of breath.

The little Prata was driven high and dry upon the wreck, hurled headlong up the quarter-deck to the mizzen-mast; where the half-stunned man lay in a dazed state for half an hour. At length, when he came to himself and found no harm was done, he sprang up and drew his precious craft to the cabin gangway, and secured it to the fife-rail about the mast.

Lawrence's next thought was to fall upon his knees and thank God for the successful issue of his perilous venture. Never was man more thankful for the divine aid vouchsafed to him, for he could now comprehend the difficulties and dangers he had escaped. Rising from prayer, he looked sadly about the quarter-deck, now so hallowed to him, as the place where his precious Lucia had lived, suffered, and died. (See Frontispiece.)

Working his way up the steep incline of the deck, past the gangway, the binnacle, and the helm, Lawrence found the signal halyards blowing in the wind. Attached to the halyard ends, and caught in the broken spokes of the wheel, was a small crape shawl which once belonged to Lady Seymour. The hot tears flooded Lawrence's eyes as he caught the precious relic in his grasp and pressed it to his lips. It was the first visible link connected with his darling, and again filled his heart with bitter anguish at her loss.

After he freed the tangled fringe of the shawl from the twirling spokes of the wheel, he chanced to remember that he was to signal his friends, and he reverently hoisted the sacred token to the peak, to inform them of his safety. The steamer was then running down the western edge of the reef, on her way to the anchorage. Forbes responded quickly to the signal, by dressing the ship with flags, and discharging a noisy broadside that reverberated grandly over the breakers.

But Lawrence took no heed of their demonstrations of joy. His thoughts were steeped in sorrow, as became a man groping about the tomb of his best beloved. Overwhelmed by his sorrow, and exhausted by the recent strain upon his nervous system, which had not yet rallied from the shock of the explosion, — he gladly sank down by the companion-way to rest, and dry his scanty clothing in the sun.

The grief-stricken man was in no haste to enter the tomb-like cabin, where he knew that everything must be desolate and solitary as a long forsaken grave. He shrank from lacerating his heart anew by further

evidence of Lady Lucia's sufferings, — as one holds a death-bearing missive in his hand and hesitates and lingers ere breaking the dismal seal, which can only repeat what he already knows.

When his clothing was dry, all but the thick Scotch cap and its cotton padding, and he had thoroughly refreshed himself with tears and prayers, Lawrence got up and looked about him, endeavoring to make himself familiar with his surroundings before he went below. The dismal black rocks loomed above the breakers about a mile away under the lee. The steamer had come to anchor and still kept her flags flying from every spar in the ship.

The gloomy, lead-colored clouds of the morning had dispersed, leaving the sky pavilioned by a cheerful blue which must needs impart hope and gladness to even the sorrowing. The strong sunlight had burned away the mist over the surf, tinting the tops of the great rollers with a thousand rainbows, gilding the countless foam-bubbles floating on the breeze to the ever-changing hues of tropic birds. The bellowing breakers continued their deafening roar, floundering as angrily as ever upon the sodden hulk, which shook from stem to stern as if in the act of dissolution.

It was a wild, weird sight for man to contemplate from the safe side of this gigantic horror. But, to an imprisoned man, clutched fast in its unrelenting grasp, stunned by its incessant roar, and momentarily made conscious of its destructive power to shatter the stranded fabric on which he stands, it cannot be deemed a commendable accessory, except the prisoner had ceased to value his life.

CHAPTER XXXI.

BOARDING THE WRECK.

WHOLLY indifferent to his surroundings, Lawrence at length began to grope his way down into the cabin, to learn the worst. The sound of his footsteps creaking on the broken stairs echoed strangely in the deserted place, and he sought to hush his labored breathing as unbecoming the presence of the beloved dead. At the bottom of the stairway he ventured to look through the after cabin door, without seeing either natural or supernatural being anywhere. The sliding doors of the staterooms were all wide open on both sides of the vessel, as though the berths had recently been occupied. And, but for the steep forward pitch of the deck, there was nothing to disclose the sudden catastrophe that had brought death to so many.

Climbing up the steep deck, Lawrence entered the cabin and groped his way along the forward bulkhead across to the Captain's stateroom, on the starboard side, where Howland said he had carried the wounded Earl. When Lawrence gained a position to look partly in at the door, there lay the white-haired old nobleman dead in the Captain's berth; just where Howland had placed him, and as he probably lay when the two girls were torn from his side. He had evidently died of starvation, he was so emaciated, being unable to move from his berth.

Lawrence stood aghast, overwhelmed by his grief while thinking of his lost Lucia, and contemplating the ghastly face of the dead Earl lying there unburied on his bier. Hearing a slight noise in the stateroom, which resembled the gasping respiration of a dying person, the brave man's blood retreated back upon his heart, and seemed to curdle and freeze in his veins. His hair stiffened like bristles upon his head, and he grew cold, rigid, and immovable as a pillar of ice. The much dreaded ghosts that haunt the sepulchers of the dead had become his companions in earnest.

Shrinking quickly back from the stateroom door, with the sense of being dragged backward by some invisible power against his will, Lawrence seized upon the brass bracket which suspended the barometer, and stood listening with bated breath, eager to confute or confirm his superstitious fears.

He had not long to wait. Ere he could dissuade his mind of its being a delusion, there came a lighter, softer respiration stealing upon his abnormal hearing. He could not doubt but the Earl was dead. And, if so, what visible shapes were these ghoul-like attendants? And what could be their mission in thus peopling the desolate wreck? These were some of the insane queries that fastened like vultures upon his mind.

Recovering his native courage, and overcoming the base superstition that had overmastered him, Lawrence again pressed forward to inspect the corpse, and confront the worst spirit or specter that might oppose him. When he attained a position that commanded a full view of the place, and was about to put his hand upon

the dead, an indrawn breath attracted his attention in the forward part of the room. He turned his head, and stood appalled!

There upon the floor of the dimly lighted cabin knelt a thin, pale, shadowy-looking creature in the attitude of prayer. The ghastly figure was as fixed and lifeless as marble, and without a visible movement to intimate that it was breathing.

The strange apparition seemed too diminutive to be earthly, too thin and fragile to bear semblance to any human creature he had hoped to find. Her long brown hair hung tangled and disheveled about her attenuated form, which was clothed in some flimsy fabric like a night robe. The bony arms were upraised in beseeching attitude. The emaciated fingers were clutched at some invisible object in the air, like the death-grip of those dying in pain.

The grief-stricken man became dazed with horror! In the dim light of the cabin he was at first uncertain whether he looked upon a denizen of this world, or an evanescent spirit from the other. He felt assured that the creature was some beneficent being; thus reverential awe now assumed the place of superstitious apprehension.

Seeing no evidence of the dear one whom he came to find, Lawrence forgot all else — the shriveled corpse and the supernatural creature — and groaned aloud in agony of spirit. Crying out in wild appeal to heaven, he exclaimed, —

"Lord! Lord! Where is my darling Lucia? Father, I beseech thee, bring me into the presence of my dearly beloved!"

The ghastly figure in the stateroom sighed — stirred — started — and staggered slowly up to her feet; upon which she tottered, as one casting off the heavy earth-clods and emerging from the grave. Slowly turning her deep-sunken eyes upon the intruder, with a vacant, questioning stare of doubtful intelligence, she asked in a weak, hoarse, hollow voice, with broken articulation, —

"What! Who — is — this? Why — disturb — the — dying, whom — God — has forsaken?"

"Lucia! my darling Lucia, is this your ghost?"

"Lawrence! My — Lawrence? — Almighty — Father! have — you sent — my beloved — in spirit — to gladden — my dying eyes?"

With outstretched arms, the corpse-like creature reeled and swooned, and would have fallen had not Lawrence sprung forward and caught her to his heart; with a cry of horror lest she was dying, as she said.

Parting the matted brown hair from off the death-like face, he sought to trace out the features of his Lucia; but not a semblance of her peerless beauty lingered there. Only in her fond blue eyes, as she had peered out from their caverned depths ere she swooned, could he glean aught that resembled his Lucia in the least.

A long, long time the cold, inanimate girl lay on her lover's arm, with but little to distinguish her from a corpse. While the radial and temporal pulse-beats were wholly gone, there still remained a just perceptible fluttering about the heart. And occasionally a slight tremulousness ran through her skeleton, like the quivering in the wounded wing of a bird.

Though still slightly alive, Lawrence had small hope

that she would ever rally. What with her sudden shock of joy, her long starvation, together with the lingering doubt that the vision of her lover might not be real, these were enough to extinguish her dim taper of life forever.

Though now lying unconscious upon her lover's bosom, when she swooned, her glazed eyes retained his precious image upon the retina, and her alert ears took down to death's verge the sweet vibrations of his loved tones. And, if for no other reason, the half-dissevered spirit of the dying girl would flutter back into life once more to renew the precious boon, thank God, and die.

With this half-formed delusion flitting through his bewildered brain, Lawrence watched over and clung to the inanimate girl through what seemed a never-ending night. Sitting in the desolate sepulcher, the companion of its dead, the hideous noises about the wreck were enough to madden him.

Shrieks, groans, and what seemed the mysterious breathings of unseen specters invaded his ear, apparently derived from the surf, which continually forced its way through the stoven bottom and pressed the confined air up through cracks and crannies in the deck, and among the bilge-vents in the side-ceiling; creating a variety of dismal outcries, according to the size and shape of the outlets. While the strong suction of the retreating water made the appalling discord of groans, as if the cavern beneath were filled with a vast concourse of the damned.

At length, as night gave place to dawn, Lawrence detected a slight respiration breathed against his face.

Then, after several fruitless attempts, Lucia slowly lifted her long, brown lashes from her wan cheeks, and her languid blue eyes looked out from their sunken sockets upon her lover with an inexpressible joy. From that moment magnetic eyes did the work of resuscitation as never before. As infant eyes, in the first days of their exquisite coquetry, learn to answer back to the maternal orbs, so the violet eyes of the impoverished ghost-girl learned to respond to Lawrence's life-giving glances.

Thus, with fond looks, re-assuring tones, and loving kisses that thrilled her icy clay, Lawrence succeeded in impressing upon Lucia's wavering mind that his presence was real — not spiritual, as she feared — and beguiled her flitting, fluttering life-flame to make a renewed effort to live.

It was not long before Lucia was seen to move her lips, in voiceless effort to speak. She evidently wished to propound questions that would settle her sanity, and the bodily presence and viability of her lover. As nearly as he could interpret the weak inflections of her lips, she seemed asking, —

"Am I gone mad? — Are you here in body, or spirit?" and such like queries. To which Lawrence answered with loving words and fond endearments. But her weak state of mind was not easily impressed, and again she asked, her dumb lips still bereft of sound, —

"How can this be my darling?" Her sad eyes confirmed the doubt that pervaded her mind. To which Lawrence replied, as he folded her tightly to his breast, —

"Listen to my heart-beat, Lucia dear. You know

that spirits are impalpable. See how my kisses vivify your being."

She contrived to answer in the affirmative, by languidly flexing her blue-veined lids upon her cheeks. After these tiresome efforts, she slept for an hour. When she awoke, she had acquired the strength to murmur in broken accents, —

"If you — are — my darling, — tell me — what — I wish — to know."

She then closed her eyes languidly and nestled her face against Lawrence's cheek, like one prepared to listen and receive his fond endearments. He told her that by some strange intervention of Providence he did not sail for America, as she supposed. That he had been kidnapped by the pirates, and, when released and on his way to Hong Kong, he heard that the Greyhound was wrecked, and came to her rescue.

At length, all these unaccountable things seemed to stun the frail creature. She shook her head for her lover to cease talking. She could not bear so much joyful news, and she made a weak attempt to put her hand over Lawrence's mouth to stop his talk. After another brief rest, she gained sufficient strength to say, —

"I'm so weak, — we are — starved. This — is manna, — from heaven; — more than — food and drink. But, — no more — now, — lest I die — from — too — much — lov—i—n—g;" and her head fell prostrate on his breast. The weak modulation of her voice grew faint, and fainter; sinking away like a dying person's. Lawrence was shocked with fear, lest she had passed away; and he groaned aloud in agony at the thought.

"Oh, God! Have I come too late? Must I lose her even now?"

His outcry pierced the prostrate girl, and with a desperate struggle she lifted her heavy lids to bestow a re-assuring look, and slowly shook her head in the negative, implying that he had not come too late.

Not until that moment did it occur to Lawrence that he had food, wine, and water, secured in the air-chambers of the surfboard, which might be of service even now. Elated with the thought, he tenderly lifted Lucia in his arms and worked his way up the steep deck to the nearest stateroom, where he laid her in a berth, evidently her own, preparatory to going on deck to unload his treasures of food and drink.

Lucia rallied sufficiently to know that Lawrence was preparing to leave her, and appeared almost convulsed. He could not leave her so, and, while he endeavored to explain his purpose, he continued to work upon her with his hands; chafing and kneading, hoping to restore circulation to her ice-cold body.

When at length she was made to see the necessity of a brief separation, she consented to his going. Yet, even then, after the mind had yielded, the hands would not comply. She had not power to transmit her mental wish and will to either hands or feet. Lawrence was compelled to unclasp her pale, emaciated fingers one by one from his knit garment, where they were clutched like the talons of a bird.

Even then, her sad eyes followed him with a gentle rebuke, as he slowly withdrew, until her reproving looks called him back to her side again and again. Her

shattered mind seemed to forget why he should leave her. She needed to be re-assured repeatedly, like the new-born intellect of an infant.

Unloading the Prata, Lawrence took his treasure of food and drink to the cabin and secured them with care, for the life of his new-found darling was dependent upon them. Mixing a little wine with water, he administered it in small, frequent doses, and watched the effect with great anxiety. To his surprise, the spirituous drink did not produce hyperæmia, as might be expected in such a starved condition; and late in the afternoon he ventured to add a few crumbs of nutritious food to his dilution of wine, which also acted admirably. After a brief sleep, which seemed to greatly refresh her, Lucia awoke ravenous for more nourishment, and while Lawrence was feeding her she found voice to whisper, —

"Dear Lawrence, how this revives me. Give some to father."

"What! Is the Earl alive?"

"I hope so. Try him. He breathed a few days ago."

With a show of pleasing the frail girl, Lawrence slid down the inclined deck to the forward room, and listened to catch the breath of the supposed dead man. To his surprise the old nobleman was alive, though insensible and cold as death. But an occasional fluttering was detected about the heart, and once in a while a sighing respiration. Trickling a few drops of diluted wine into his Lordship's gasping mouth soon had the effect to increase heart action. Lawrence then prepared a solution of brandy, which acted finely, and in about

three hours the patient opened his eyes, though he remained dumb as a corpse.

Finding Lucia was asleep when he returned to her berth, Lawrence seized the opportunity to look about the cabin in search of food. But, as nothing could be found in the line of food or drink, he took the occasion to communicate more thoroughly with the steamer, as the second night was about to shut down upon him.

The ship's color-bag was found in the transom locker. Taking the flags to the deck, Lawrence filled the signal halyards with Ensign, Blue Peter, and many other flags, and ran them up to the peak to express his joy. This display of bunting surprised his friends on the Barracuda, coming as it did twenty-six hours after his arrival on the wreck; and the only interpretation put upon it was that Lawrence had become crazy, or had found the Seymours alive. Why he had delayed the good news so long was a mystery that remained to be disclosed. Captain Forbes responded quickly with his colors, and soon after denoted the general gratification by firing several guns.

Lawrence was too anxious and hungry to remain up long. As twilight was approaching, he climbed down the broken stairway to his patients in the cabin. Finding father and daughter were slumbering quietly, he made another unavailing search for something to eat, and finally adopted Howland's plan of fishing down through the hatchway in the cabin floor.

The fish-lines were found near at hand in the mate's stateroom. A piece of decomposed fish still remained on one of the hooks, which answered for bait. An

instant after the hook had run down among the rocks under the stoven run, a small sized rock-cod seized the bait, and was soon pulled up, and lay floundering on the floor. As the flesh of the cod is soft and less sweet than many other rock-fishes, Lawrence repeated the operation, and caught some other varieties more to his taste.

His fishing ended with an ill-omened incident. He hooked a large-sized cod, and pulled him to the surface; but not wishing to draw it out upon the floor lest the floundering should disturb the sleepers, he knelt down upon the deck to unhook the fish and set it free. While in the act of doing this, a huge ground-shark thrust up his open maw, and seized the cod, and it was only by the smallest chance that Lawrence snatched away his arm in time to save it.

This untoward incident possibly accounted for the manner in which Irene first lost her arm, and then her life, after Howland had left the passengers to their fate, as Lady Seymour could in no way account for her maid's disappearance.

After a hearty meal of raw fish, Lawrence first gave due attention to the Earl, and then took his station by Lady Seymour's berth for the night. Seating himself as comfortably as he could near the berth, he held Lucia's icy hands in his while she slept, endeavoring to impart something of his own warmth and magnetic strength to the frail creature, who was predisposed to receive nutrition from his every touch and look of endearment, as the parched earth will rob the very air of its humidity.

After many brief and placid slumbers through the night, Lady Lucia woke to consciousness in the morning, and lay palpitating back into life and strength, with her inmost soul dwelling in her eyes, in joyous response to her lover's questioning looks, as a tiny newcomer responds to the paternal glances.

If Lawrence slept at all during this second night's watch, it was with Lucia's thin, clammy hands held fast in his own. Only thus could he snatch a few minutes' sleep at a time before the thrash and thunder of the surf overhead would awake him, or that more hideous floundering of breakers in the caverned depths of the hold, which ever seemed madly intent upon the complete destruction of the stranded ship.

Alas, if this strong-hearted man of the sea could not compose himself to restful slumber amidst the resounding blows of the encroaching waters, what must have been the supernatural fears and mental strain upon the tenderly nurtured maiden and her wounded parent during the long past weeks of appalling terrors?

Thus ten long laborious days passed before father and daughter acquired sufficient strength to induce Lawrence to feel assured that he could rally them. Even then it required the closest scrutiny to discover the remotest semblance of Lucia's former self.

Occasionally, in the past week, Lawrence had written brief messages to Captain Forbes, which he had inclosed in bottles and sealed jars, requesting him to respond with a gun and the Blue Peter at the fore, if he got the word. But as yet no response had been given to the numerous messages sent. In despair of attracting the

steamer's attention in that way, he succeeded in fishing up a small empty cask from the main hatchway. Into the bunghole of the cask he inserted a vial containing a note, protecting the vial by a cloth wrapper, and pounding in the bung securely. On the head of the cask he cut the words "Look inside," to draw their attention to the contents.

On the twelfth morning, after the sun was well up, and had thoroughly dried the dew from the deck around the taffrail, Lawrence wrapped Lady Lucia in a blanket, and carried her on deck to witness his doings, as she always became uneasy while he was out of her sight. He had previously lashed the helm securely, and placed a mattress against the binnacle, so that the girl could have a firm rest for her back, as the deck was too steep for a weak person to maintain either seat or foothold upon it.

The warm sun and the cool breeze were the best life-giving accessories to coax the delicate creature back to health again. While the hideous din of the breakers was less irksome to the ear now that the eye could watch them roll down upon the wreck in their majesty and might, and behold the sparkle of the leaping spray, with the foam bubbles winging down the wind like a ceaseless flock of lories.

When the cask which contained the message was ready to launch, Lawrence ran his colors up and down at the gaff to attract the steamer's attention. Climbing to the mizzen-top to watch, he saw the officers of the Barracuda gathered on the poop with their glasses; then Lawrence returned to the deck, and rolled his cask into

the sea, and again mounted aloft to learn the result of his enterprise. The cask was caught up by the savage breakers, and tossed and dandled about like a fleck of their own foam. The first comber lifted it aloft, and hurled it onward long enough to attract the steamer's attention. Then the cask was suffered to fall back into the deep trough of the seas, and was wholly hidden from view; but again and again it appeared on the surf-tops, and was borne on past the island into smooth water beyond the breakers. There a boat from the steamer took it in tow, and pulled for the vessel.

Lawrence waited impatiently in the top to note the results. Ten minutes after the cask had been hoisted aboard, a gun was fired, and the Blue Peter run up at the fore, in acknowledgment of the message. In his note to Captain Forbes, Lawrence stated that it would be many weeks before he could hope to remove his friends, adding that all provision and water suitable for the sick ones were exhausted, and that he had been living wholly upon raw fish, of which he caught plenty in the run.

He suggested that John Kanaka should try to reach him on a surfboard, bringing a fresh supply of provisions and water, else he would not be able to build up the strength of the Seymours sufficiently to withstand the shock of an encounter with the surf, over which they must escape.

As the following day continued mild and bright, Lady Seymour was again brought up and placed on her mattress in the sunshine. The Earl was also lifted from his berth, under protest, brought to the deck, and deposited near his daughter, where Lawrence could divide

his attention between them. Both enjoyed the genial warmth of the sun, though its light almost blinded them after their month's confinement in the damp and noisy cabin.

Soon after the little group became fixed for the day, the steamer took her anchor and steamed around to the north of the Pratas. What she was trying to do, Lawrence could not see in the smoky distance, owing to the unusual evaporation rising from the crests of the breakers. After two hours further watching, and reporting to the invalids on deck, Lawrence discovered something caught up now and then and borne down toward them by the surf. The object proved to be a newly made surfboard, drifting on the breakers without an occupant. The tiny craft was hurled over and over, and sometimes wholly buried from view. Nothing was seen of the unfortunate navigator, whose vessel drifted down past the wreck, out into the sea beyond, where the steamer picked it up when she returned to the anchorage.

The steamer's colors were flying half-mast, showing that some one had been lost while trying to reach the wreck. This event cast a gloom over the wrecked ones, which was still further increased on the following day, when the Barracuda was seen to land several men on the island, set her Blue Peter at the fore, — a signal when leaving port, — and steam away in the direction of Hong Kong. It then seemed as if their last hope of rescue was gone.

Lawrence endeavored to cheer the disconsolate ones as best he could. But his consolation was made unavailing when he found himself obliged to tell them that his

small stock of provisions was gone. He advised them to again try to eat raw fish, which he could catch fresh for them in the run. The fish were found to make them both sick; and, as vomiting took away their strength, they were obliged to desist and starve again.

There followed a sad night of protestation and prayer for all. The divine light that had shone so sweetly round about them, making God's hand visible in everything which transpired, seemed to have been eclipsed by a cloud of blackest desolation. To have died while in the senseless state in which Lawrence had found them would have been a joy, which both had longed for to the last minute of sensibility.

But now, when they had been rallied to a new love of life, a new appreciation of past existence, to be starved over again and made to endure one by one the long list of previous horrors, was more than they could bear. Such an experience is burned deeply into the heart, and can never be erased from memory. To watch the flesh wither and disappear, as snow is wasted by the sun; to feel the heart being daily crushed into a smaller compass, while its beats hourly become weaker and weaker until pulsation fails to be distinguished; to cringe under the ceaseless torture of a starved brain, which burns with an endless fire that cannot be extinguished, are some of the horrors which these high-born people had endured. What wonder that they now felt themselves forsaken by the God of their fathers!

The old lord was most bitter in his reflections, most impatient of any consolation which could be offered. After the aggrieved old man had dropped to sleep, and

Lady Lucia had been placed in her berth, Lawrence imparted his plans for saving her, — which had the merit of subdividing his own abundant resources with the woman he loved, until, when the end came, they could depart out of life together. At first, the over-sensitive girl was horrified at her lover's proposition; and it required considerable persuasion to induce her to comply with his wishes.

When Lady Seymour became composed, Lawrence applied a ligature to his left arm, punctured the brachial vein, and induced the terrified girl to drink freely of his warm blood. It had a fine sedative, as well as nutritious effect, and the nervous young creature soon dropped into the most profound slumber that she had enjoyed.

With such a weight of anxiety on his mind, Lawrence could not compose himself to sleep. He sat with his head bowed upon the berth-board till long after midnight, and then climbed the creaking stairs to the deck. During the next hour there was a cold, drenching night-fog hanging over the Pratas.

This dense mist had the effect of hedging in the horizon more closely about the lone watcher, till only by a strong effort of will could he rid himself of the delusion that at length the whole earth had become inundated by the demon-waves; and the longer he dwelt upon the wild hell of water, and listened to its insane ravings, the more his distorted fancy became impressed with a sense of isolation.

Suddenly the humid mist swept away from the vast field of embattled waters, and gave place to the splendors of a full-orbed moon. The change was magical,

and the mental effect upon the watcher was charming. The moon disclosed a scene of sublimity and grandeur which cannot be described, wherein sadness and sorrow might easily be dethroned for a time.

A new gleam of hope soon pervaded the depressed heart of the solitaire, and dispelled his nightmare visions, for over all the surf-haunted shoal the moonlight now lay upon the windrowed water, till it shone like burnished silver; and one could almost forget its cruel capacity for destruction while pondering its awe-thrilling beauty.

The most beautiful of all the ever varying aspects of shadow and sheen were disclosed by the ponderous surf-crests, when the breakers mounted up into thin, smooth, glassy arches, whereon the moonbeam lavished its countless rainbows, and through which it pierced down into the deep, dark troughs of the seas with the gorgeous tints of sunset.

More fairy-like, if less beautiful, was the exquisite display of flame-colored foam-bubbles flung aloft by the tossing spume of the crests, which floated down the wind like migrating flocks of tinsel-winged insects. While the strong shimmering moon-glade at the south verily bridged the turbulent sea-tops with a bridge of gold in the direction of the welcomed orb. As if Diana wished to point out the least dangerous way of escape for the imprisoned ones.

CHAPTER XXXII.

SAVED FROM STARVATION.

NEARLY a week had passed since the Barracuda left the Pratas. Day after day Lawrence had continued to nourish Lady Lucia upon occasional draughts of his own blood. The starved girl finally overcame her repugnance to the new diet, and was thriving finely upon the *elixir vitæ*, while the loss of blood did not seem to weaken Lawrence very much.

The Earl had not been induced to partake of that which must eventually destroy their almost savior. Since the provision gave out, his Lordship had subsisted wholly upon a few spoonfuls of brandy and water, Lawrence having saved a few cupfuls of rain during a night-shower.

Early one morning two small steamers appeared in the offing. One vessel steamed to the north of the shoal, with an energetic show of undertaking some enterprise by which to reach the wreck. The largest vessel ran around to the south, and anchored in the lagoon. She was flying Admiral Seymour's pennant. This event brought a gleam of hope to Lawrence and Lady Lucia, but the Earl had become too weak and indifferent to take interest in that or any other occurrence.

After coming to anchor, the flagship fired several guns to attract Lawrence's attention. Taking his glass into the mizzen-top, he at once discovered a line of large

black letters painted on the steamer's trysail. At first this was difficult to read. But when the sail was set taut, and presented more squarely to the wreck, it read plainly, —

"We are Trying to Reach You."

These were cheerful words. But how Sir Michael's men were to reach the wreck remained to be seen. Lawrence was not sanguine, and his loved companion was hopeless. The Greyhound's colors were run up and down at the peak in answer to the message. After hours of tiresome watching, a gun was fired by the distant steamer, and Lawrence again climbed to the top, as did the Admiral's officers. Late in the afternoon a life-boat came drifting down the surf bottom-up. She passed near the wreck, with no evidence of any one clinging to her. The steamer followed down the western edge of the surf in time to pick up the life-boat when it hove out into smooth water, and then she ran in and anchored for the night.

This unavailing sacrifice greatly saddened the Greyhound's people. While they were sorrowing over the sad event some object washed up on deck. Lawrence and Lucia were sitting near the binnacle in the twilight hour; thinking that it might be some package from the steamer, Lawrence slid carefully down to the stump of the mainmast, against which the object was washing to and fro, and drew it up on the dry deck.

It was the corpse of Captain Royal. He had drowned while trying to rescue his passengers with the life-boat. Lawrence was greatly affected, and did not dare to tell

Lady Seymour that the brave Captain of the Greyhound had come back to visit his loved ship once more — though accompanied by Death.

Lawrence crept up the steep deck to where Lucia sat, and, after making the best deceptive story he could invent, took the weak girl in his arms and sat through the twilight in silence. Poor Royal! he had shown the sterling quality of the man, in making this useless sacrifice. Strange that he, having once been saved from the wreck, should lose his life while trying to reach it again.

The next day the small steamer again ran around to the north. About noon a number of small casks came floating down on the breakers, passing both sides of the wreck. They probably contained provision, but none of them reached the Greyhound. The day was spent in like futile efforts, and at night the steamer ran around to her anchorage again.

On the following morning she steamed earlier than usual to the north. Neither Lawrence nor his companion took much interest in her efforts. But hours after, when she again called attention by her gun-fire, Lawrence made a weary effort to reach the top, for the continuous drain of blood, aided by his depressed spirits, began to tell severely upon his strength.

Languidly raising his glass to look down over the tiresome breakers, he caught sight of a small object perched on the crest of a mighty comber. It was a surf-board, with a brown-bodied man upon it; paddling with his hands to keep his craft pointed down the front of the crest, and occasionally shying his buoyant vessel to

the right or left by the aid of his feet — as a boy guides his sled in coasting.

This looked like business. The boatman was a Kanaka, lying flat upon his belly; and seemed as much at home in the water as a seal. Ten minutes after, the lusty shout of the hero rang out above the roar of the breakers, and in obedience to a signal from Lawrence the brave fellow spun his little craft in upon the wreck with a yell of delight. Springing to his feet, he shouted to Lawrence,—

"*Ya rana! ya rana! Aloha okou!* Me, Raiatea; Tahiti kanaka. You, Americum man, makee boate. Raiatea sabe makee boate go. *Aloo! aloo!*"

Lawrence descended to the deck and shook hands with his tawny friend. "You've done well, Raiatea, and I thank God that you have succeeded."

"Raiatea sabe too much. Capum R'yal, him no sabe; he *máke, máke* [dead]. John Kanaka, he no sabe, big shark eate he. Big boate, plenty men, no good. All *máke moe* [in dead sleep]."

"Have you brought us something to eat?"

"*Nui, nui!* — plenty, plenty."

The gallant fellow leaped about the deck, slapping his naked thighs, like one beside himself. He was delighted with his surfboard — which was larger than Lawrence's — and greatly amazed at his success, after so many disasters.

Lawrence was greatly pleased with this new acquisition of man, boat, and provision. Slipping out the corks from the air-chambers, the wonderful surfboard was soon made to disgorge its wine, brandy, provision and water; all of which were carried carefully below.

From one of the smaller chambers, Raiatea drew forth a vial containing a note from Admiral Seymour, in which he advised Lawrence to take all the time needed to strengthen his patients, before trying to escape, as a steamer would wait, at his command. Sir Michael further asked for any suggestions, by which he might aid them, expressing grave doubts of transporting two sick persons over the surf by any process.

Leaving the Tahitian on deck, Lawrence went below to feed his patients, and hunt up some clothing for the Kanaka. When rigged out in Captain Royal's shirt and pants, Raiatea was taken into the cabin and presented to the passengers. The introduction over, the magnetic fellow was sent to *lomi-lomi* the Earl; the art of massage being in daily use among his native islands, and he exclaimed in delight, —

"*Lomi-lomi maikai!* Tahiti man he sabe too much. Americum man he *lomi-lomi wahine* [girl]. Kanaka he *lomi-lomi haole* [white man]."

The mercurial Polynesian was like a sudden sunbeam to the solemn trio. He went at the old nobleman with a relish, and his Lordship enjoyed the kneading of his torpid body and patting of his icy limbs. Five days of vigorous manipulation and good food so rallied his patients that Lawrence began to mature his plans for escaping.

It now became necessary to reply to the Admiral's note. A water cask was fished up from the after hold, with Raiatea's aid, and got on deck; the head taken out and dried in the sun. Into this cask were placed two trunks of clothing and other valuables belonging to the Earl

and his daughter. A message was put in relating to Lawrence's plan of escaping on the two surfboards; and further stating that in about five days, should the weather hold good, he would make the final attempt to embark. This accomplished, the cask was headed up and made ready to set adrift.

When the Admiral's attention was called by a signal at the peak, the cask was given to the ferriage of the breakers. As the cask was not carried upon the island, but drifted down past the west end, through many obtruding rocks, Lawrence discovered that the westerly current was greatly increased during the week of the full moon.

This made it doubtful whether they could guide the overburdened surfboards to the island; and Raiatea agreed with Lawrence that if they got a fair start, and the passengers endured the passage well, it would be best to avoid landing on the rocks; but to sheer around the point, and run a mile farther over the breakers into smooth water beyond.

When the lookouts on the steamer reported that the cask was drifting past the island to the sea, a boat was sent out to wait its coming, and tow it to the vessel. An hour after receiving the cask, the small steamer got up steam, took her anchor and headed away for Hong Kong. The Admiral remained, awaiting the final event, which was deemed utterly hopeless by all on board.

The five days of probation passed, and all had gone well with the people on the wreck. Lady Seymour had thrived rapidly, and the Earl had done fairly well, so that the following morning was appointed to make a

final attempt to escape. It proved almost a sleepless night for three out of four of the group.

After finishing his evening work on the Earl, Raiatea retired early, and slept like a log until called to his task of *lomi-lomi* in the morning. When Lawrence had thoroughly accomplished his task of labor and love for the night, upon Lucia, they returned to the forward stateroom.

The Earl lay slumbering quietly in his berth, after the restful manipulation he had undergone; but he awoke when his daughter entered, in a more tranquil state of mind than usual. Lawrence and Lady Lucia nestled into a big lounging-chair near his Lordship. Thus they spent the night together, conversing in quiet tones, imparting their hopes and fears to each other, and saying their last loving messages for home friends, if by chance one of their number should survive the desperate undertaking.

Without a thought for himself, Lawrence strove to be cheerful on account of the others. Not for an instant could he rid his mind of the haunting thought that the dearest of God's creatures was to be subjected to a fearful risk, an almost hopeless undertaking. Two persons clinging to one surfboard was unheard of.

The almost certainty of disaster happening to one or all of them weighted his fond heart with a load of misery hard to endure. While thus contemplating the responsibility of his coming attempt, by some sudden impulse Lucia twined her arms about his neck and whispered in his ear, —

"Dearest! I shall not care to live if aught happens to

you. Life would become unendurable with you lying dead at my side."

"Oh, Lucia, you are but interpreting my thoughts. Darling, pray to God every hour of this precious night that he will suffer us to live or die together."

"I am praying for that while I lie here in your arms, dear Lawrence. O my precious one, I thought I had loved you with all the affluence which woman has to bestow, while I was in the health and bloom of my girlhood. But, O noblest of men, in coming to us as you have done at the certain peril of life, you have sanctified our love in the sight of God and his holy angels, until my whole soul has gone forth in sweet homage to such goodness and greatness."

"Dear Lucia, am I not repaid beyond measure for coming, in thus snatching two such rich, rare natures from starvation?"

"I know that my poor father will always appreciate this heroic act. And God grant that your little Lucia may prove worthy of the risk you have run for her."

"Ah, dearest, I fear my coming is robbed of its best merit, as I should have lacked the manhood to undertake the rescue but for my love for you!"

"Will your Lucia love you less for that fault, think you? Dear Lawrence, think how you have made me flesh of your flesh, in nourishing me for days on your own precious blood. Ah, me! the limit of life is not long enough to repay you for such a sacrifice."

"Ah, little darling, you can repay me in a day, if you promise to be brave and trustful to-morrow. I believe that I am but God's chosen agent sent to snatch you

from this ocean horror; join me in this belief, and all will yet go well."

"Oh, how well I can promise you that, and all else which you may ask. The strength of my trust in you, dearest, words can never disclose. But you will know the integrity of the Seymour faith and courage better after you have tested both to-morrow. When you shall have flung this wasted frame into the sea, and seen how willing I am to live or die, sink or swim with you, then you will know me as you cannot now."

"We are talking too much. You should rest. Let me hush you to sleep, for the night is far spent, and my dear one will need her utmost strength for the coming tussle with the breakers. Had I not better lay you in your berth for an hour's rest?"

"Not for the world, dear love. These are possibly, nay probably, our last hours in life. Is it not meet that our beating hearts should lie in closest union through this brief respite? Suffer me not to be separated from you so much as an instant throughout these sacred hours. Dear, dear Lawrence, wrap me more closely about with your strong arms, brood over me tenderly with your great love, and I will hush to sleep as lovingly as a nursling on the maternal breast."

Lawrence took her at her word, and she was soon sleeping soundly, breathing as softly as when a blue-eyed babe in Moorland Castle. Through all those gray morning hours the old Earl also slept, in unconscious slumber. Over that frail young creature how tenderly a strong heart watched and wept and prayed, feeding upon her aromatic breath as one cherishes the fragrance

of flowers. Though his eyes were often blinded with tears, and his lips were murmuring inarticulate prayers, yet he hushed his own breathing and turbulent heart-beats lest he should disturb the tranquil rest of the sleeper.

When morning dawned bright and fair upon them, Lawrence studiously shaded the blue lids of the sleeping girl, dreading to awake her from such peaceful repose. Though he had been wholly bereft of sleep himself, yet he felt strong and eager for the perilous duties of the day. Like one assured that the Divine presence had been round about that little group throughout the night, Lawrence felt no more doubt. A white-winged message from the All-Wise had been whispered to his soul, and the blessing of supreme faith was given into his keeping.

An hour after sunrise Lady Seymour stirred for the first time. Her long brown lashes lifted from her slightly tinted cheeks, till her glad blue eyes disclosed a sweet surprisal when realizing where she was. Then came the dread remembrance of what was in store for her, and her heart beat wild and fast. But, scanning her lover's face with closest scrutiny, she too began to partake of the strength and tranquillity which sat like a *gloria* upon his brow. Nestling her young face back upon his breast, she prayed aloud for Divine guidance throughout that day.

Then Lawrence assured her that all was well. That it had been vouchsafed to them from God, in answer to prayer, that whatever might happen in the coming days there was a life of love, piety, and peace held in store

for them. His words came to her like a prophecy. Though swift tears filled her eyes, and her lips quivered with emotions too exquisite to impart, she lost not an instant in questioning his faith, but looked her thankfulness into his eyes as she drew his lips down to meet her own, and pressed heart to heart as she had never done before.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

RESCUED FROM THE WRECK.

IT was a busy time on board the Greyhound that morning, while breakfasting, and making their final preparations for leaving the wreck. After the Seymours had made the best meal which their impoverished larder would permit, more of stimulants than food, Lawrence prompted Raiatea to do his duty by the Earl, as never before. While he laid his own beloved charge in her berth, and brought her circulation into full activity, lest a congestive chill should deprive her of life by too long contact with the cold breakers.

When all else had been accomplished, and the sun had eaten away the fog, and come out bright and warm, Lawrence requested father and daughter to dress in warm, double under-flannels, with no other encumbrance, lest they should weight down the frail craft which were to bear them.

Lady Lucia was soon ready, and came blushing from her stateroom at the novelty of her attire. While Lawrence assisted her to the deck, Raiatea was ordered to set the signals agreed upon at the peak, to notify the Admiral that they were ready to embark. That done, the Tahitian helped the Earl up the cabin stairs, then Lawrence helped him to secure the old nobleman upon the surfboard, named Raiatea in honor of its hero.

Strong bands were fastened across his body by the side beckets, leaving the arms and legs free for swimming should Raiatea need his assistance.

Lawrence then performed the same duty for Lady Seymour. Being less weighty, she was more tenderly cared for than her father. Lucia was permitted the additional comfort of a small, thin pillow to support her chest and face; for the prone, abdominal position is deemed the only safe one.

Though the overruling One had blessed them with a mild, pleasant day, yet never had the stupendous surf seemed to run so swiftly and mount so high; breaking with an angry roar that was deafening.

The swimmers were to cling to the stern end of their surfboards, guiding them the best they could, while trying to impel their craft down over the fore-front of the surf, in spite of the loads upon the frail floats — double weighted by their fears — and the drag-weights of the swimmers behind. It was a task which required strength, endurance, and a special skill that few possess. It is impossible to depict the novelty of such boating, and the unique terrors of such peril to one unaccustomed to breakers.

Lawrence helped to drag the Raiatea into the water just behind the broken mainmast, as all wished to go along together as near as possible. Then he quickly drew his own little Prata down the steep deck into the tossing spume, wishing to nicely adjust its precious burden to the exact requirements of the craft.

When Raiatea launched his Lordship further out into the wild swash of the seething waters, to test the trim

of his float, with the natural timidity of a sick person, the old nobleman groaned aloud, and gave voice to a piteous cry of terror; begging that he might be left behind to starve rather than be subjected to the horrible death which awaited him.

His brave little daughter appealed to him to be quiet, as he was in the best of hands, and would be saved if it were possible. The nearest approach to terrified emotion shown by Lady Seymour was expressed by the tender, trustful glances she bestowed upon her lover, as he loosed her fastenings and drew her back upon the surf-board till its trim was fixed to his mind. Though she remained voiceless as a statue, her calm blue eyes were more potent than words, and the confidence and affection which they expressed instilled the might of a giant into the heart of her lover.

The proud little peeress was verifying her promise of the previous night, that her lover should this day learn her capacity for courage and calmness as never before. Even when Lawrence purposely thrust the Prata out into the wild surf-swash and let it toss like a cockle-shell on the boiling foam: and suffered an expended foam-crest to wash over Lucia's lithe frame, not an articulate cry passed the lips of the maiden, though a quick shudder ran through her at the chill touch of the water.

Watching for one of the largest breakers, Lawrence at length gave the word to launch — he taking the first comber, and Raiatea the second. The monster breaker of his choice approached looming masthead high, and came leaping down upon them with the roar of a cataract; its front towering so high above them that even Law-

rence doubted the possibility of their reaching its precipitous top before it should bury them fathoms deep in foam.

But the launch was well timed, as the surf had partly spent its force by overriding the sunken wreck before the shattered crest caught up the little Prata. Lawrence had extended himself flat upon the water, holding fast to the stern-becket of his surfboard, which was pointed directly away from the coming breaker.

When the terrible crisis came, the strong swimmer was urging his tiny craft forward with all his power. Then down came the on-rushing breaker with the rumble of an earthquake and the fury of a whirlwind. For an instant the vast arch of tumbling water and boiling foam cast down a shadow as black as doom, and then submerged vessel and crew for a minute, till both were hidden from view as if gone forever! Lawrence held his breath the best he could, depending upon the buoyancy of the Prata to bring them to the top of the wave.

Following Lawrence's directions to the letter, the brave little Lucia quickly buried her face in the wet pillow, shutting out both air and water for one terrible moment while the angry surf floundered down upon her with the weight of an avalanche. Not until her lover shouted and shook her foot, did the terrified girl lift her head to find herself riding fairly upon the back of the overmastered sea-monster. Proving beyond debate that a sick woman has treble the courage of a sick man; for a piteous cry of terror was heard from the Earl, mingled with the roar of waters, until checked summarily by the surf which ingulfed him.

It required Lawrence's constant effort to keep the surfboard pointed down over the front of the surf, as the burden of two persons clinging to the little Prata proved a dreadful drag-weight upon it; and too well he knew the danger of letting his frail craft sag back into the trough of the sea, where he would have to repeat the terrible risk of being overwhelmed by the next succeeding breaker.

Swimming with a firm grasp upon one of Lucia's ankles, as a constant assurance of his presence to the anxious girl, Lawrence employed his spare hand and both feet in propelling his float; endeavoring, also, to guide his surfboard around the rocky point upon which fifty English seamen were stationed to assist in the rescue, should the swimmers be tossed upon the island.

As they approached the Point, the water shoaled so as to compel the mammoth surf to rear like a mettlesome charger; rising higher and higher in its endeavor to override the rocky obstruction in its path, the once broadly arched surf-crest narrowed quickly at the top, until Lady Lucia was seen heading downward over the front of the breaker, while Lawrence was hanging by his full weight over the back of the wave. This awkward situation compelled him to swim up-hill with redoubled exertion, trying to hold his own until the wave should again broaden at the top sufficiently to contain both surfboard and swimmer.

In that terrible emergency, countless jagged rocks began to appear before the swimmers down in the deep dark trough, protruding from ten to twenty feet above the shallow water over which the Prata must pass. A

thrill of horror ran through the doomed ones to be thus waylaid by these rock-demons, whose tangled sea-weed manes tossed exultingly in the turbulent waters, as one after another they emerged from the forward breaker, verily like Cyclopean monsters hungering for the approaching victims.

Not until that instant had Lady Lucia uttered a cry of terror or looked a glance of dissent since she emerged from the first cold grip of the breaker. But now she turned her head quickly, her wild eyes seeking one last look from Lawrence, — a last word with her dear one, — as she exclaimed with a cry of anguish, —

"We are lost! Oh, cling to me, darling, as you promised, and let us die bravely together."

"Trust me yet, dear girl. The surf *may* take us over. Shut your eyes and pray to God for succor."

But his words imparted no hope to Lucia, as her Lawrence's face was deathlike, — white as the savage surf whereon they rode. His prophetic vision had already disclosed the dead girl tossing a mangled corpse on the breaker, and he who scorned fear for himself exposed his timidity for his darling.

But at length, with a louder roar and a grander arching of its crest, the stupendous breaker bore them over the tallest rocks that had lain ambushed in their path. Yet before they were wholly over the shoal, and fairly free of the leeward reef, Lawrence's strength began to give out. Then his utmost efforts could not prevent the surfboard from sagging steadily backward, until both board and swimmer had slipped down the back of the wave, and Lawrence could see the black rocks looming

over his shoulders, again threatening certain destruction to them both.

Even in that hopeless moment a happy thought flashed through his mind, and he shouted to Lady Lucia, who was an expert swimmer, to use her arms, and paddle with all her might. Fastening his teeth upon her garment at the ankle, Lawrence brought his two arms into play; and, by the superhuman exertions of both swimmers, the buoyant little Prata drew slowly up the back of the breaker, gaining inch by inch, until they rounded fairly over the broadening crest of the surf, and were safe for the moment.

So desperate had been their efforts to impel the surfboard well over the front of the wave that they risked going too far, for they advanced until the thin, white hands of the brave little Lucia were seen paddling against the empty air. The fleet Prata had been projected a third of its length beyond the overhanging arch of the breaker.

Lawrence resumed his original hold upon Lady Lucia, — but for whose timely aid they would have been dashed upon the rocks, — and, exhausted as he was, managed to steady the surfboard over the remaining distance, as the sea deepened quickly, while the surf steadily diminished down to the edge of smooth water. Soon as he could recover his breath, Lawrence addressed a needed word of cheer to Lucia, who was so completely overcome that her little head lay almost lifeless upon the wet pillow.

"My brave girl! cheer up, for we are safe now. You saved both of our lives in that moment of peril. Let us

thank God for answering your prayer, while we may. Dear Lucia! I would not be elsewhere at this moment for all the world."

"Yes, dear Lawrence, I realized the danger; but I trusted in you, who have never yet failed me. You, who not only restored me to life, but have also made me brave and strong in spite of my sickness and loss of heart."

"Look, dear one! and see how the steamer's boats are racing along with the surf to our rescue. Our ocean-steed is too fleet for them, for we are riding swift as the wind."

"I see them; and I, too, am glad to be here in the act of being saved by you. The joyful thought links me to life again, and re-assures me of the mercy and justice of God, who, I thought, had forsaken us forever."

"The ordeal has been a severe one to us all, and I have been as rebellious as yourself. Now that the danger is past, look out over the water. Is it not glorious to have mastered these mad waves, and to ride them as one rides a well-trained racer?"

"Yes, my Lawrence; it is indeed grand and glorious! But to me, darling, he who has mastered these sea-monsters is greater than they. Oh, my darling, my strongest incentive to live is that I may love and honor you as you deserve."

"Bless you, dearest, you have already honored me more than I deserve. Look! we are almost free; for these breakers are but puppets, after such as we have ridden upon."

"Dare I ask you to look back, and tell me if I am fatherless?"

"The Earl is safe, two seas behind us, but farther to the west."

"Thank God! Oh, how grateful I feel! Noble Raiatea deserves well of us."

"Yes, my love; and he shall never know want, or need welcome from this hour."

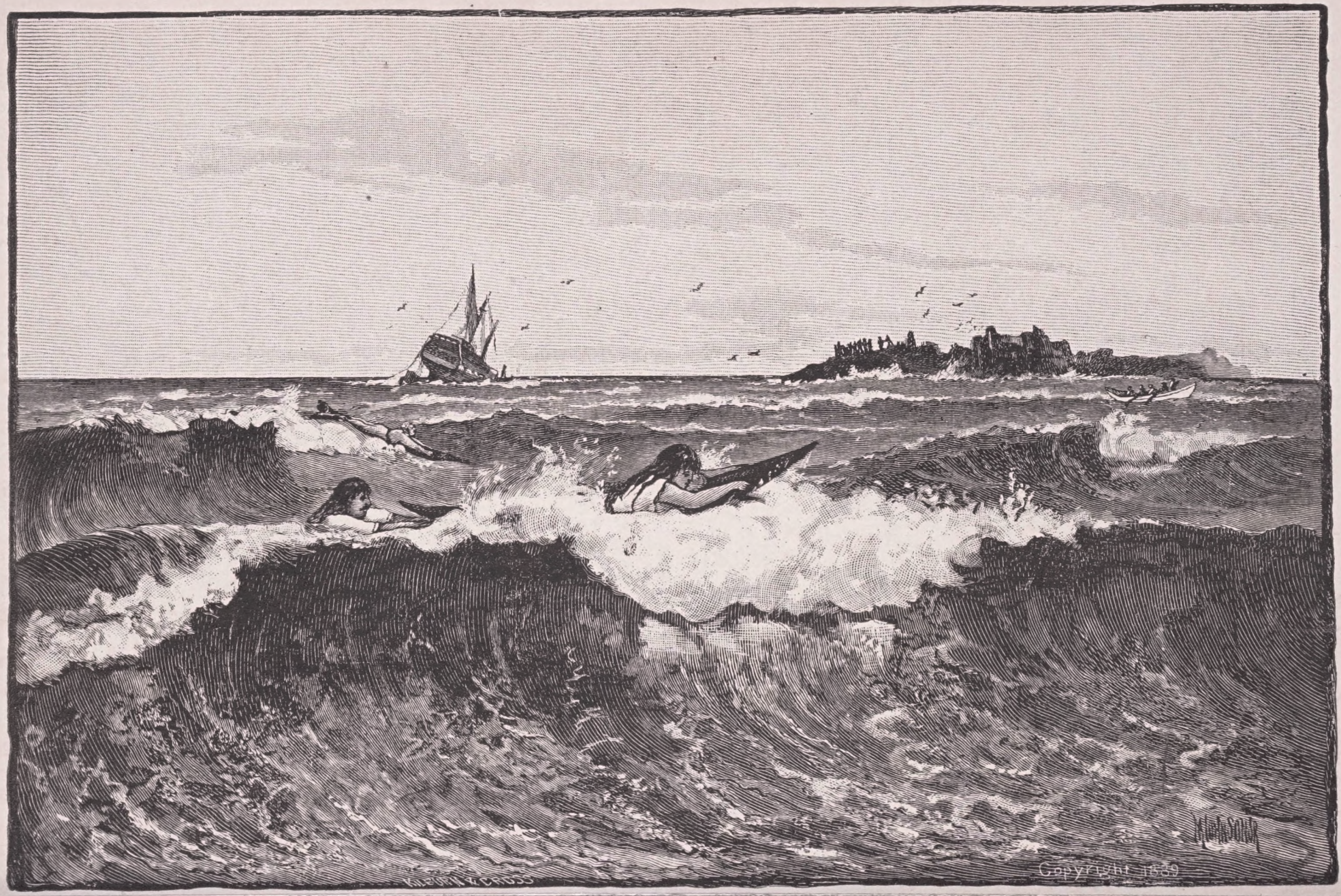
"Amen! to that promise, dearest."

Soon as they shot fairly out into the tranquil sea, Lawrence swam forward and caressed the pale cheeks of his loved one, kneaded her neck and rubbed her icy hands, till the boat arrived. Lucia could only smile in answer to his attention, and faintly respond to his loving glances and words of endearment. Her strength had vanished, and she was chilled from her drenching in the icy water.

The Raiatea came bounding out of the breakers a little way to the westward, and the brave Tahitian was heard shouting in well-merited applause at his success, as he had earned the right to do.

The first boat came pulling down at the utmost speed, in command of Lord Montford, Lady Seymour's cousin, and tears were streaming down his Lordship's cheeks at sight of the corpse-like girl. He brought his boat gently alongside the Prata, ready to receive Lucia and Lawrence.

The bands which bound Lady Lucia to the surfboard were cut, and she was lifted tenderly into the boat and taken to the stern-sheets by Montford. Lawrence climbed over the gunwale, and requested that the Prata be taken in tow and carefully hoisted on board the steamer.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Taking Lucia from the arms of Montford, who seemed most reluctant to part with her, Lawrence wrapped a boat-cloak about the half-swooning girl, and bade the men pull for the steamer with all their might, as the frail creature in his arms had barely strength to ask, —

"Is father alive, dearest?"

"Yes, dear; I saw him move his arms as they were lifting him into the other boat." Thus assured, Lucia fainted, and lay limp and lifeless in her lover's arms. Montford was greatly affected, as he believed his cousin was dead.

Lawrence urged the crew to do their utmost; appealing to their sympathy by telling them that Lady Seymour was chilled to the bone, and would die if not soon relieved. The burly tars responded to his demand, till the pliant ash sprung, and the cutter leaped over the water like a bird. Well they knew a brave act when they saw it accomplished; and while they honored the hero who had thus risked his life to rescue the girl, they mourned with a real grief to see her now lying dead in his arms, as they believed, and hot tears were stealing down the tawny cheeks of the burly fellows as they pulled and sobbed in genuine sympathy with the hero.

As the boat shot alongside, a chair was lowered by a whip-tackle for Lawrence's reception. He sprang into it with Lucia in his arms, and was quickly hoisted to the deck. There Admiral Seymour met them at the gangway with a warm greeting, exclaiming, in the fervor of his gratitude, —

"Thank God that I live to see this day! Captain Lawrence, you are a noble fellow, a brave man; and you

are always found where some perilous work is to be accomplished. This deed merits knighthood, and you shall have the honor, if an old sea-dog retains credit with his queen. — Montford, do the honors of the cabin, while I wait to receive St. Clare. The steward has prepared hot blankets, and the doctor will administer a hot stimulant."

Montford led the way down to the Admiral's cabin, where everything had been prepared to restore the half-dead girl, who began to show indications of a congestive chill. The steward brought the blankets from the galley stove, and laid them in the berth; and, as soon as the old surgeon had administered his hot whiskey and water, Lawrence placed his charge in the welcome folds of the blankets, with hot bottles at her feet, and then began to divest the unconscious girl of her wet garments, which were replaced by some of her own clothing previously saved from the ship.

These attentions had the desired effect within an hour. A slight moisture was induced, together with an easy breathing, ending by the resuscitated girl's dropping into a quiet, restful slumber.

This accomplished, a cup of hot coffee and a bountiful breakfast were furnished Lawrence for the time; and he made a rousing meal from whatever was set before him, as an inordinate hunger had been induced by his unpalatable diet of raw fish. He then wheeled one of the Admiral's easy-chairs near to Lady Lucia's berth, and fixed himself for the much needed rest after the long, hard strain upon his nerves.

The old Earl was brought down in a most critical con-

dition, as he had been rolled over, buried in the surf, and half drowned. Raiatea had had a difficult task to propel one so weighted with terror as to be of no assistance in managing the surfboard. The Raiatea could not be kept on the breaker that they embarked upon, and when the following comber overtook them and buried the Raiatea fathoms deep, the brave Tahitian became hopeless of rescuing his human freight from a watery grave. But, after many hours of assiduous labor, the old nobleman now began to rally, until he, too, was saved, and fell into a heavy slumber.

As soon as a head of steam could be made, the steamer was got under way and shaped her course for Hong Kong. Before sundown she was fifty miles away from the never-to-be-forgotten Pratas — the most treacherous shoal in the most dangerous of seas.

Lawrence devoted himself exclusively to Lady Lucia, who awoke weak and feverish from the terrible strain upon her nervous system. She could not bear to have her lover out of her sight for an instant. As no other opportunity was found for Lawrence to relate his experience while on board the wreck, the Admiral and Lord Montford gathered about Lady Seymour's stateroom, eager for every detail of the marvelous rescue; for the wreck of the Greyhound, and the singular escape of her noble passengers on surfboards, stands unprecedented in the record of maritime disasters.

Tears streamed down the cheeks of the venerable Admiral, as he listened to the strange recital of finding his starved niece and corpse-like brother. And when Lucia related the pathetic sequel in her weak and tender

voice, — which Lawrence meant not to disclose, — telling how her devoted lover had drained his own life-blood to save the fluttering spark of her existence, after the provisions had been exhausted, then the white-haired Admiral sprang up and embraced the hero, and fell on his breast, weeping at such unheard-of devotion.

It was indeed a proud moment for the rescued peeress, when she witnessed the appreciation of Lawrence's self-sacrifice and brave acts by such men as Sir Michael, Captain Walsh, and Lord Montford. And well was the young hero repaid for all that he had risked and endured for his idolized Lucia, when her fond blue eyes beamed tenderly and prayerfully upon him, as he sat there holding her hand and relating the full text of his story.

Much that Lawrence had to tell was as new to Lady Seymour as to the other listeners. For, when he came to the rescue, her mental faculties were in such a dazed, almost imbecile state that she did not comprehend much that transpired at the time, nor could she remember aught of it afterwards.

The steamer arrived at Hong Kong late on the following day, and proceeded at once to Kow-Loon, as the healthiest resort in the summer months. Governor Dinsmore was informed of the rescue, and at once sent his state barge for the whole party; insisting upon their making their abode with him while they remained at the port. Lawrence demurred somewhat at intruding upon the Governor, and even the Admiral's urgent appeal could not persuade him to the contrary. But when Lady Seymour declared that she would not go

without him, the stubborn fellow gave up, and joined the party; especially when he learned that the Fleetwing had long since sailed for America.

Never had Admiral Seymour shown such hearty goodwill toward Lawrence as now. He sounded his noble deeds about upon all social occasions, and, as may well be imagined, the society of Kow-Loon was full of sympathy for the lovers, about whom there centered a most romantic interest; so desperate had been the heroism displayed in the rescue, and so exalted was the rank of the rescued ones.

Sir John and Lady Angelina welcomed the party including the Admiral and Lord Montford, to their sumptuous official residence, where everything was done to make their guests happy and at home. Both the Admiral and the Governor set to work upon dispatches for the home government, to be forwarded by the Earl when he sailed, as all of their previous dispatches had been lost in the Greyhound. And it is needless to say that Captain Lawrence's brave deeds were set forth in a stronger light than ever.

As Lady Lucia objected to Lawrence's leaving her even for a day, Captain Drinker was sent for, at the Governor's request. He stated that the Fleetwing had sailed two months before. Braybrook, the mate, was put in charge by the Consul. As the belief was general that Lawrence was either killed or enslaved for life by the pirates, there seemed to be no reason why a new captain should not be appointed and the vessel sent home.

Much to the delight of the Seymours, this left Law-

rence at liberty to return to England with them. This he probably would have done under the circumstances, as Lady Lucia had induced many promises that he would never leave her again. Now, at her earnest request, the banns of their marriage were officially published at the end of the week, the final ceremony to be consummated at the earliest period of returning health, as father and daughter declared that never again could they be separated from one so endeared to them by recent events.

Though the most strenuous endeavors were made to induce Lawrence to disclose what he knew about the stronghold of the pirates, he persistently refused at present. Such was his sympathy for Aloata, and his belief in her statement that the leading men at Pulo Gular were bent upon weeding out the low scum of humanity who were proscribed to the Point Settlement, when they would abandon active piracy.

In the public press, Captain Lawrence explained that the pirates proper were but a small minority among the thrifty and well-meaning inhabitants of Gular. Thus, if the new rulers chose to reform their present manner of life, by expelling all obnoxious persons and abandoning piracy, they should be permitted to do so. At all events, as his life was spared upon his solemn promise not to betray the whereabouts of their stronghold, he would give them five years to accomplish the good work. If they failed to do it, he would then give what information he had to impart, and perhaps lead an armed expedition against them.

In this brief disclosure Lawrence forbore to inform

the public of there being not less than fifty million dollars of treasure hidden in the secret vaults of the great temple of Chandi Sewa; lest this information should induce the whole world of pious reformers to join in a holy crusade against the pirates — not because of their piracy, but for the purely moral task of robbing the robber.

. . . . . .

Learning that Lord Eldon, the new ambassador to China, a lawyer of great legal attainments, was a life director in the Bank of England, Lawrence presented a case parallel to his own: Wherein a person came into legal possession of documents making over to him a valuable bequest consisting of large deposits in the Bank of England, though said bequest was demised by an outlaw, the property having been legally acquired from a deceased parent's estate.

Without hesitation his Lordship declared in the affirmative. Stating in detail that the prime question for the bank to decide would be the identity of the person holding the certificate of deposit, and the demise of the original holder of the property.

With this opinion for a basis, Lawrence put Aloata's documents into Lord Eldon's hands, requesting a written confirmation of his decision.

Captain Forbes and Lieutenant Ringold were called in to bear witness to the death of the pirate queen. Also to testify that Lawrence was found in possession of said documents when rescued after the explosion of the Arsi. In this way Lawrence was confirmed in his legal holding of deposits in the Bank of England, valued at a million

and a half dollars, acquired from Aloata's paternal inheritance, and bequeathed under the hand and seal of the testatrix, witnessed in Chinese characters by Lieutenant Hong Along, and by Scotia McAlpin in rude but intelligent Celtic.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

HOMEWARD BOUND.

BOUND homeward, to one that has wandered far, and tarried long years away from loved home and dear friends, is man's first appreciative foretaste of bound Godward.

It was a charming day in the harvest month of September, when the silk-laden ship Sea Queen ran merrily down through the Sunda Straits, home-bound from Singapore to London. The beautiful American clipper had carried the wind strong until late in the afternoon, when the mystic influence of the coming southeast trade — which pervades the Indian Ocean — began to be felt, and suddenly clipped the wings of the monsoon, which does not often extend south beyond the verge of green water.

As night closed down upon the ship, Captain Noble took his "departure" from the famous Krakatoa. Java Heads were just lifting their frowning crags from out the deepening shadows, on the port side, while the moon-touched mountains of Sumatra rose into lofty peaks on the other hand.

Creeping slowly up from the southern ocean, the huge refracted moon could be seen lurking beyond the hill-tops of Java, stealing slantwise up with timid footsteps behind the long line of palm trees that fringed the rising

ground. The verge of the eastern cliffs trended upward so nearly in line with the rising moon that the slow-coming orb continued to peer down through the pendulous fronds of the palms with furtive glances, verily as if invisible fingers were parting the long plumy leaves to make apertures for her shining.

The humid night-airs were becoming dense with the delicious aroma wafted out from the aromatic shores; an exquisite mingling of rare perfumes exuded from tropic fruits, fragrant flowers, and spice-laden shrubs; enticing scents that pervade the nostrils with sensuous delight, and woo the heart into a happy mood *en rapport* with the fairy-like scene.

On such a night every element in nature gathers reverently about the moon-throne, as pilgrims flock to a holy shrine in rapturous mood to pay homage to all things bright and beautiful; while earth, air, and ocean seem thickly peopled with invisible presences which hover about on poised wings, fanning the odorous air as they pass; giving assurance of their presence in the whispered benedictions which they let fall upon the just, and the sweet solace of hope that they breathe into the hearts of the pure and lowly.

Softly and quietly the home-bound ship rippled through the moon-touched waters, sailing as motionless and noiseless as the bronze-colored clouds occasionally seen stealing like cowled monks through the evening sky. Still the gently blowing breeze clung affectionately to the Sea Queen, loath to unclutch its farewell grasp from a thing so graceful and queenly as a ship with a cloud of white wings aspiring starward.

The moon had now risen until the whole aquatic scene was made lustrous with her light, gilding the fluctuating weather-vane at the main-truck, and tinting the sheeny canvas till every sail in mid-air seemed animate with life, as 'twere the white wing of a seabird.

Now that the dying monsoon had nearly blown out, its touch became more tender, and its breathing grew broken and sobbing, like an expiring mortal conscious of dissolution. The wind first forsook the great courses and other lower sails; then lingering for a while in the full-breasted topsails, where it clung with the tender grace of long companionship, and reluctantly left them to pay its whole attention to the topgallant-sails and royals. Finally, it ended by whispering its latest breathings to the lofty skysails, its tiny playfellows which tower among the clouds; leaving the whole vast spread of lower sails to hang limp and lifeless against the masts, till the ship lay as motionless upon the water as the companion isles.

It was a night too bright and beautiful for slumber. An elysian scene too full of ennobling influences to be lost to human experience, lest it might never recur. At least, so thought two newly wedded hearts on the homebound vessel, two sweetly blended souls that had been inured to a more temperate clime.

Lady Lucia Lawrence and her husband had taken possession of the weather quarter boat, and sat hand-in-hand in the stern-sheets, watching the moonbeams glinting the sails with a silvery sheen, and looking off upon the bewitching radiance of the sea.

To one gentle heart among the night-watchers there

was something awe-inspiring in this death scene of the wind; the well-defined interregnum of the Trades and Monsoons, together with the startling mystery of sailing upon a windless, waveless sea; while the ghostly monsoon still lingered among the skysails, with only the interlucent moonbeams between it and the mirror-like water.

At midnight, the moon rode high in the zenith, flooding the slumbering sea and the breezeless ship with her golden effulgence; and, but for an occasional undulation which rolled in from the southeast, the vessel now lay motionless upon the blue margin of the vast Southern Ocean. A white-winged albatross circled about the heads of the watchers, like some guardian spirit of the night; while the mottle-backed Cape pigeons flew almost within reach, questioning with their askant eyes the propriety of wedded lovers thus trespassing upon the small hours, with Luna quadrupling their loves by her mystic rays. For even birds have the intelligence to vivisect loving emotions which are as epicene to them as to ourselves.

An hour later the welcome trades began to ruffle the blue ocean into mimic billows, singing pleasing lullabies, as melodiously as homeland brooks when purling among meadow grasses and rustic flowers. The wind freshened steadily until every sail was drawing merrily. The studding-sails were sent out alow and aloft, speeding the Sea Queen swiftly on her homeward course. The lovers, charmed by the ever changing scene, still sat listening to the cooing breeze and the melodious murmur of the tiny wavelets, wondering to see the limp sails again

bellying out to the new-born wind as gracefully as if carved in Serravezza marble.

Lady Lawrence's exquisite beauty was greatly enhanced by the bewitching moonbeams of such a night. Since her terrible experience upon the wreck, the girl had not fully regained her robust health, yet to her fond lover there was an ever present spiritual beauty about his girl-bride that well might make her seem a kindred spirit with the enchanting elements of beauty about them, while the lute-like accents of her voice, and the low silvery ripple of her girlish laughter failed not to awaken new-found chords of tenderness in his heart.

Ah, what a heaven-sent joy is the refined love of one noble heart for another. A bewildering emotion that adorns the loved face with a divine halo, lustrous as the presiding star of the firmament, and which comprises the most seductive anomaly in human experience. As the weird lunar influence controls the boundless ocean, — modulating its winds and accelerating its tides, — so Lawrence's love seemed to melodize Lucia's every act and utterance; quickening her deepest emotions until her azure eyes disclosed the secret joys of the heart, and her tell-tale lips prompted her lover to a feast of roses.

Time had passed rapidly while the rescued ones were at Hong Kong, weaving the summer days into eventful months and changing seasons. Lady Seymour had quickly regained her health, at least sufficiently to become the all-willing bride of her hero of the sea. Her experience upon the wreck had taught her that none other could care for her so tenderly as Lawrence, and that no touch could prompt the sluggish blood into its vacant

sluice-ways like his. The sequence of such reflections served to hasten the consummation of her wishes for an exclusive claim upon one so loved and so deserving.

They were married in the humble fane of Grace Church in Victoria, with God to witness the consummation of their vows, and a few loving friends to participate in the public joy. It was the hearty wish of the Admiral, the Earl, and Governor Dinsmore, that the bride should have a public wedding and a sumptuous reception as became the rank of the St. Clares, and the fame and popularity of the bridegroom; but those most interested declined all ostentation and publicity, with a firmness that was immovable.

Two hearts that had so recently escaped from the dismal abode of death had necessarily become chastened and subdued in their joys for the present, if not forever. Such approximate acquaintance with death to the loved ones had led them both to apprehend new views of love and life. They had lived so near unto the presence of the Deity in those sad days that henceforth the vanities of life could find no place in their hearts. Henceforth their pleasures must consist of something less frivolous than empty show before their fellow-men, creating enmity and a false estimate of themselves.

Soon after the marriage, there being no suitable vessel sailing for England, such as Lawrence and the Earl wished to venture in, Admiral Seymour, wishing to inspect another part of his fleet at the south, proposed taking the party across the China Sea to Singapore in one of his war steamers. This plan pleased all concerned, as several American clippers were known to be

loading at the free port of Singapore, some of which were chartered for London.

A month's residence in the salubrious climate of Southern India greatly benefited Lady Lawrence's health, a resident English merchant, Mr. Beaver, tendering the party the hospitalities of his opulent home. There Lady Lucia regained her normal strength, and acquired something of the rich bloom of former days in her cheeks, and the old brightness and intelligence in her rare blue eyes.

The Sea Queen was chartered and loaded by Mr. Beaver, and, when ready for sea, St. Clare and the Lawrences engaged passage in her for London, taking the whole after cabin for themselves. Raiatea and his Lordship's valet soon took possession, and transported their masters' personal effects on board.

It was now their third night out from Singapore. The ship had been three days working her way down through the Gaspar Straits, past the North Watcher into the Straits of Sunda. The anxious passengers were glad to have escaped the ever-present danger found among the countless sunken reefs and coral isles at the North. Now the vast stretch of Indian Ocean and the Stormy Cape lay before them. It was Captain Noble's purpose to touch only at Cape Town and St. Helena, so the homeward voyage became a pleasant anticipation to the lovers.

As they sat in the quarter boat late into the small hours, Lawrence was the first to break the pleasant reveries into which they had fallen, —

"See, Lucia, the morning star is rising in the east, and the middle watch is nearly out. Time we were in our berths, my darling."

"As you wish, my lord and master. Always remember, dearest, that I shall henceforth indulge in the exquisite luxury of having another to care for me, — a dear, sweet privilege that only a convalescent woman can appreciate."

"Have you not become satiated with these ever changing beauties of the night?"

"Is it possible to indulge to excess in such enticing glories as these? I am charmed with the countless inarticulate voices which are whispering in my ear. If God can unfold to us such an exquisite scene upon the sea, darling, tell me what the Father has in store for us among the stars."

"It is indeed a rare night scene that we have witnessed, — a fortunate experience for you, after the horrible impression you have acquired of the sea, from your sad imprisonment on the Greyhound. We have enjoyed the night so much that hereafter this spot should become a hallowed place in your memory."

"I never dreamed of anything so enchanting, and I hope that it may displace some of the nightmare visions of that awful wreck. Must I go just yet, darling? I shall do as you wish, but everything about us is so bewitching that it serves to sustain and not to tire one in the least."

"I am surprised at your endurance. I feared it might overtax you. But the air is so bland and the trades are so light, there is no danger of taking cold."

"Dear Lawrence, it is so kind of you to indulge me a little longer. As you say, I am trying to fill my memory with mellow moonlight and the merry music of these baby billows, hoping to displace our previous experience, the thought of which still makes me shudder."

"Well, my Lady, prattle away just a few minutes more, if you wish."

"Thanks. Life seems such an unusual luxury to your little wife to-night that she would fain fill the soul to the brim while she may. Do you know, I cannot divest my mind of the impression that the spiritual semblances of other dear ones are hovering about us now."

"It is a surety of God's love that I never doubt."

"My mother's lullabies greet my ears to-night, sweeter than bird songs. I hear them in the breeze, I catch them in the purling sea. Shall I tell you some last wise sayings of Lady Maud's before we retire?"

"Yes, dearest, anything about your noble mother will ever be of interest to me."

"Calling me to her side during her last year at Moorland, she stroked my head with her dear hand, and, delving deep down into my girl soul, with her great soft eyes looking into mine, she said, 'Lucia, remember you are mother's only child, the one only hope of my noble St. Clare. When mother is gone, darling, and laid away among the daisies by the lakeside, be thoughtful of the instructions she has given to her best loved. Be thoughtful about your associates among men. With your beauty and your rank, the world lies before you. Choose reverently, choose wisely, choose goodness and merit before all else, wherever you find it, Lucia.

"'Remember, my darling child, that mere rank, wealth, or exalted position is no criterion of purity and goodness. Our hereditary aristocracy are tainted with many vices, and only the best of them are worthy of my daughter. Seek the counterpart of your noble father, if you expect to find happiness in this world; and when you find such an one, cleave unto him as the earth cleaves to the sun, and find your well-being in gratifying his wishes.'"

With clasped hands and moist eyes, Lady Lawrence remained lost in solemn revery for a time, contemplating the never-to-be-forgotten face of her sainted mother in the kindly visage of the moon. At length, taking her husband's hand between her soft palms, she continued, —

"As I lay weeping upon her knees, Lady Maud raised my head and kissed me fervently upon the brow; the glow of that kiss still lingers where the saintly mother placed it, for it was her last, as the Lord took her home that night. After kissing me, mother gathered me into her arms, with a foreboding shudder that she must soon part from her child.

"We sat long in silence, until the twilight deepened around us, while mother sang me to sleep with one of her low, sweet melodies which has come back to me so vividly to-night. This token, dear husband, has become to your Lucia a sacred assurance that our dear mother is gratified with my choice of you, which adds an untold sweetness to my happiness — so blessed by your noble love!"

The winsome creature drew her husband's manly face down to her own, and touched her lips with a wifely fervor where they most loved to dwell.

"This is, indeed, a pleasant assurance; and, coming from such a source, will ever be held sacred by me. But do you know, Lucia, that I fear you may sometimes be made to feel my lack of rank, when among your proud associates at home."

"Rank indeed! Think you that loving hearts are swayed by patrician birth? You must surely know that your brave deeds will entitle you to the highest esteem among hereditary nobles? As for me, I have chosen a husband as mother instructed, and I know that I have chosen well."

"It is well, dearest, if you have no cause to reflect upon your hasty choice."

"Yes, my noble husband, it is 'well;' it is more than *well!* for the world holds not another such for me. In the great courts of Europe such heroism as yours is held in the highest esteem, entitles you to the foremost position in society, and leaves you the choice among the fairest women in the land."

"Ah, my Lucia, your arrogant aristocrats cannot be expected to look upon me with your partial eyes."

"You are wrong there, dearest. Witness the genuine homage that is paid you in these outskirts of creation. Fair women and noble men have everywhere estimated you at your true value. Have you not already scored two profound loves, and nearly buried them both in a season?"

"Yes, dear, and it makes me tremble to think how near Aloata and my Lucia came to lying in adjacent ocean graves. God grant you may not err in the value you place upon me."

"If it were not by God's sanction, think you we should be here to-night? And if we had not the approbation of my angel mother, her death song would not now dwell so pleasantly in my ear."

"Nevertheless, it were best for a woman of rank to marry among her equals, and reflections will certainly be cast upon you that you have not mated with one of your own exalted rank."

"Peace, peace, O my noble husband. When a proud descendant of the Somersets freely tenders her love to you, does not her hereditary rank become the strongest factor to prove that her affection is genuine and imperishable?"

"You are becoming much too earnest and eloquent in your argument, and I must take you below, lest you overtax your newly acquired vitality. Blue eyes are growing bluer, and tinted cheeks have become too profuse with roses. Your little fingers are throbbing in my grasp, and your voice has become tremulous with a tearful tenderness, lest I should not fully concur in your choice of a sailor man for a husband. Through it all, you did not quite discern the source of my fears; that I tremble lest some cruel fate may yet snatch you from my arms, and place you as a new constellation in the sky, to shine where the lost Merope is seen no more — for wedding a mortal far beneath her celestial sphere."

With tender gallantry Lawrence pressed the pretty hand to his lips, stepped out upon the monkey-rail, and lifted Lucia to her feet. Calling to the Yankee officer of the watch to steady the step-ladder while Lady

Lawrence descended to the deck, he assisted her down on her way to the cabin.

"Not much use o' my stan'in' ar watch, I reckon, wid two sech wide-awake watchers ez you folkes ter look arter ther Sea Queen."

"Well, Mr. Jepson, I'm afraid such watchers would let the ship steer awry; for we're more given to star-gazing than conning the helm," replied Lawrence.

"I'd risk yer runnin' down the North Watcher, wid two sech eyes ez hern to boss the job. I knows a thing er two 'bout blue e'es. I wuz onct young mysel' — odd ez it may seem to yer — an' hed gumpshun 'nough to pick out jes' sich ar pair o' blue ones. But thet wuz the end on't — e'ena'most."

"Oh! Mr. Jepson," exclaimed Lady Lawrence, "you must tell us all about your blue-eyed lady, during some night watch. You will, won't you, sir? For perhaps she was a relative of mine; who knows?"

"Jerusalum! no, mum. I reckon her folks wuz May-flower Pilgrims; fur she wuz ar Cape Cod gal, big-footed fur travelin' on sand, an' wid her hide full o' fish-bones."

"Well, you will tell me all about the little blue-eyed Pilgrim, won't you?"

"I'll calkerlate 'bout it, mum. Howsomebber, there's not much ter tell. Jim Jepson jes' gut the mitten, mum. An' them ere blue e'es jist struck to the stomach. Then, yer see, young Jim he jes' gut his ebinezer up, an' sailed in the fust craft offerin', for Injia: the Dolly uv Salem. Fust voy'ge, fifty years ago, mum."

"Oh! I'm so sorry. What a nice Mrs. Jepson she

would have made, perhaps. And you have not forgotten her yet, have you?"

"Nary a time, mum. She most gin'rally stan's ther watch wid ole Jep. Sallie Winthrop ain't ther gal to leak out uv ar man's mem'ry very soon. I hope to find her up in kingdom come, 'fore long, mum."

"Well, good-night to you and Sallie, Mr. Jepson."

"Good-night, mum. I'll lef' Miss Sallie ter speak fur hersel'."

Here was a counter experience in human life, with which to contrast their own exquisite happiness. When in the privacy of their cabin, Lucia disclosed how her own gentle heart had been touched by Mr. Jepson's story, as she exclaimed with a sigh, —

"How glad I am, dear Lawrence, that somebody didn't jilt little me, that memorable night upon the balcony; else I, too, might have become a loveless wanderer for half a century, like poor Mr. Jepson."

Though her voice was sad, and her face was serious, Lawrence's merry laughter and pleasant raillery disclosed to his little wife that there was also a comical side to her suggestion.

CHAPTER XXXV.

THE WELCOME HOME.

THE memorable voyage of the Sea Queen ended safely with the ship's arrival at London. Winter had since come and gone. The tardy English spring had indulged in playing loose and fast with the fickle season, with the coyness of a shy lover.

At length the affluent June foliage began to robe the ancestral parks of old England. The fragrant hawthorn hedges gladdened the eye of the wayfarer, and the sweet-scented locusts along the roadside to Moorland were whispering of summer glory, tempting loving hearts over field and fell, and into bosky dells and garden bowers.

It was a happy day for Lady Lucia and Sir Charles Lawrence when their sumptuous carriage approached the Moorland hills — her childhood's home. At Lucia's command, the driver of the family vehicle stopped on the brow of a breezy hill. When the dust made by the pawing steeds had blown from before them, she pointed out to Lawrence her ancestral domain, — now become her marriage dower, — and with girlish delight welcomed him to one of England's grandest manorial homes.

Not in all England is there a fairer scene than the flowery meads and undulating farm-lands seen lying

about the wood-fringed Moorland Mere, and the ancient birthplace of the Seymours, whose castellated walls are aged and ivy-clad, the work of centuries; as Moorland Castle was once the favorite retreat of William the Conqueror, and by him bestowed upon the Somersets — the grandest ducal family of their day.

Lucia had purposely made a wide détour that she might prepare a sweet surprisal for her much-loved husband, by disclosing her home from its best point of view. Seen from the south, the blue lake lay between them and the castle, beyond which rose the southern slope of rolling hills, with here and there great flocks of South Down sheep browsing the green herbage, as they were led hither and thither by their tyrannic bell-wether. Other fields grouped about the massive barns and out-buildings of the dairy, at the west, were thick strewn with comely milch-cows or fatted kine, feeding or ruminating beneath the hedge-rows and in the grateful shade of the scattered oaks.

With linked hands and tender glances that disclosed sacred emotion too deep for utterance, the wedded pair sat silently gazing at the pleasing prospect spread out before them. The deeply indented valleys were dotted with thrifty tenant farms and their vine-clad cottages; here sombered by shadow, and there smiling in the strong sunshine that lay in a shimmer of gold on the blue lake and green lea, and over forest and fell. It was an enticing picture of peace and plenty, most restful for the home-coming lovers to look upon after their experience of wreck and starvation, together with the satiety of long years of travel in foreign lands.

Well might Lawrence's hand tighten upon the tremulous little fingers lying so confidingly in his own, and his loving eyes interpret his gladness to the wistful soul beside him. It was an occasion of great joy to both; and excessive joys are so near akin to sadness that they sat tearful and speechless, until Lucia put up her quivering lips, and Lawrence touched them so lightly that even the alert coachman could not bear witness: except from Lucia's low ripple of laughter, that tinkled on the air verily like the pretty brook by the roadside.

Having found her tongue, Lady Lawrence continued to prattle like one of the merry linnets in the hawthorn hedge. "Darling, all within the scope of your ken has been the heritage of the Somersets and Seymours for centuries. Being my father's, it now becomes mine. Being mine, it henceforth becomes yours, because you are the keeper of Lucia Seymour and all she possesses."

Lawrence could only answer by pressing her little hand to his lips, as she glibly continued, —

"You who have been accustomed to make the wide world your domain, tell me truly, husband mine, will you not strive to be content 'midst such a happy scene as this? Your little wife is ready to devote her whole life to beguiling you from the grand and beautiful, though treacherous sea."

"It is indeed a fair scene, and I know no wish at present beyond possessing it and you."

"But will it not be difficult for my sailor boy to exchange the great ocean for such a bit of blue aqua as yonder mere?"

"Perhaps it would, my Lucia, were there not a fair

Leucosia domiciled upon its shore to charm me by the sweetness of her siren songs. It is a charming sheet of water in which to mirror cloud and sunshine, and bears a less dangerous billow than we boated upon when escaping from the Greyhound."

"Look, my Lawrence! yonder at Castle Pier lies the pretty yacht which you admired on the Thames. I purchased it, and hastened it on here to surprise you."

"Dear girl, you are full of surprises. You have a tact beyond the cunning craft of your sex, to include a boat in the matchless bounty of your love."

"I hoped to please you, dearest, and wished to show how watchful I mean to be that your every desire may be gratified. Here you can launch your own little Aloata, — for thus I have named her, as you will see upon the stern, — and may seek less dangerous adventure than rescuing a starving maiden."

As the carriage skirted the margin of the blue mere, several children discovered the family vehicle across the lake, and shouted the glad news of their mistress's approach. Instantly the boisterous outcry was caught up from cottage to cottage, until every soul took up the shout — from hoary grandsire to toddling child — and one and all hastened to gather upon the castle lawn to greet their new master, and the loved daughter of their absent Earl.

When Rob Roy, the venerable porter, swung wide the lodge gate to let them pass, Lucia saw by his white locks that time had been busy during her absence, pilfering the years from the old-time servants of the household and park. At the side of the gate-keeper stood his

buxom wife — a new acquisition — bowing and blushing, tolerably disturbed lest her mistress should not discover the whiteness of her apron, which she smoothed down in a sweet, prim way.

As the carriage wound slowly up the graveled road, the ever watchful birds twittered their accustomed welcome as of old, peering into the smiling face of their young mistress, as eager to have their new plumage noticed as was Madge, the porter's wife.

From among the glad faces of the summer flowers, none showed more joy to see the coming lovers than the June roses and great peonies, which were clustered about everywhere. Evidently they had not forgotten the dainty maiden of long ago, whose graces they had copied, and at whose coming they had ever perfumed their sweetest — as to a fairer flower than they.

Even the stately oaks and the great drooping elms — many of them decrepit with centuries — leaned lovingly over the happy young wife and whispered their glad benedictions as she passed. High above the slow-moving coach the venerable trees touched hands in token of their delight, greeting the wedded pair with the paternal visage of grandsires, showing a fond remembrance of the brown-haired, blue-eyed girl, whose springtime shouts once caused their low-hanging leaves to dance with delight at her coming.

The merry shouts of a hundred rosy children greeted the comers, as they ran forward to cast their flowers into the open carriage, with a universal cry of "Sweets to the sweet!" The tearful welcome of the parents evinced a deeper reverence, as they strewed their floral

offerings along the road, where passed the last scion of the great house of Seymours, whom they loved as if she were their own child.

Old men prayed aloud in thankfulness to God, in glad outbursts of senility. As they lifted their shriveled hands into the air, their white locks streamed in the wind, till they appeared like a host of patriarchs making offerings at some shrine of Mecca.

Great was the joy of one and all that the much-loved heiress of Moorland Castle had been snatched from a winding sheet of waters, and had come back to gladden their old eyes once more. To children, parents, and the tottering grandsires, Sir Charles bowed often, for his name was constantly coupled with Lady Lucia's, by whatever appellation her people addressed her; for not a child among them all but had been taught by whose heroism she had been saved, and unto whom they were indebted not only for the life of their young mistress, but also for that of the noble Earl.

Soon as the carriage stopped before the Castle, it was quickly inclosed without by a half-circle of tenants upon the lawn. The house servants were gathered upon the veranda, and within the hall; while the housekeeper, steward, butler, and other trusted members of the household crowded into the porch, eager to greet their young mistress and her noble husband.

The steward was already known to Sir Charles, having made frequent business calls at the town-house of the Seymours, in London; and he now presented his companions. The rubicund old butler came waddling down the double line of under servants, the big tears trickling

over his corrugated face at the warm greeting he received from Lady Lawrence; for Rawley was the third generation of butlers born and reared at the Castle, and was held in high remembrance by Lady Lucia. Other prominent personages of the household were presented to their new master and much-loved mistress.

After the servants had been dismissed, the matronly housekeeper showed the happy couple to the sumptuous suite of rooms which she had been ordered to prepare for their reception.

Having laid aside their dusty garments, washed, dressed, and partaken of a hasty lunch, at the insistence of the paternal butler, Lady Lawrence took the arm of her husband and led the way to the library; a massive old room, quaintly furnished with its antique surroundings. Facing the south, it overlooked the lake and a wide sweep of thrifty farm-lands, and had ever been the favorite resort of Lady Maud and her studious daughter.

After gazing their fill upon the charming landscape, Lucia led her husband across the room to show him the lifelike portrait of the Countess, her revered mother. Seen by the lingering glow-light of a declining sun, this rare semblance from the hand of the great Lawrence was worthy of all praise. Lady Maud was one whom Lucia had adored in her childhood, and now revered as an ever-present Spirit of the blest.

A flood of youthful recollections welled up from the long-gone years as Lucia bowed her head before the sainted mother, gathering about her in the dim light of the dying day like veritable embodiments of the sad past, come forth to welcome the young wanderer to her

home. The occasion and the hour had the effect to overcome the young bride, until she burst into tears, and fell upon her knees in an outburst of mingled grief and joy, calling aloud to the sainted parent, —

"O mother! mother! will you not permit me to look upon your dear face once more; will you not bend earthward from the God-land and behold my joy? See, precious mother, whom I have brought to our loved home to revere your memory in company with your child. Come forth into this cherished room, and bless the dear one who rescued your husband and your child, as you used to bless me at this hallowed hour.

"See, she comes! the dear mother comes at my call, to bless us, and sanctify our lives to each other." And she held out her hands to Lawrence, who was reverently kneeling by her side, and watched while he received the invisible blessing which she had so earnestly invoked. Hand in hand they knelt there in the deepening twilight, with subdued hearts and aroused souls, intent upon receiving a blessing from the sweet-faced Christian who peered down from the canvas like a spiritual presence upon them. At length they rose, and Lucia seated her husband in her mother's chair, which was sacredly kept where Lady Maud last occupied it. She drew an ottoman to Lawrence's side for further conversation; but he caught his young wife in his arms, and nestled her close to his heart; brooding over her as with the sheltering wings of Love. There they sat through a quiet hour in the gathering gloom, grown dumb with new revelations, as the complex surprisals of their love dawned upon them at unexpected moments.

Not a word was spoken throughout that hushed twilight hour. Lawrence was left to interpret the voiceless emotions which brooded over his little wife as best he could. He was left to listen to her uncertain respiration, and guess the mystery of her tremulous heart-beats, as she lay like a delinquent angel in his arms — one tempted from high heaven to partake of the bliss of a rare human love.

She, dear soul, could not help peopling her silence with an exquisite vehemence of emotion that imparted its rapture through every quivering fiber of her being. Ardently as she had loved her husband amidst all the varied scenes through which they had passed, she found something new and delicious in the sanctity of this home-love which crept over her like a divine elixir from the gods.

It was a fit occasion for Lady Lawrence to have related many reminiscences of this favorite room of the Countess. But the hour was passed in silent communion by the bridal pair, until the chapel chimes called them to prayer. Lucia had previously expressed a wish that the village pastor should be sent for, and the tenants notified that the family would hold a praise meeting, in thanksgiving for the safe return of the Earl, Sir Charles, and herself.

Allowing due time for the people to gather and be seated, the wedded pair wended their way down the aisle to join in the vespers, under the lead of the young curate of Moorland Cure. It proved another occasion for the affectionate people to show their joy at the return of the long absent family.

The happy pair ended their evening with a quiet walk at the lakeside, where the stars were reflected in the glassy amplitude of water: Orion and the Northern Bears having taken the place of the Southern Cross and its compeers, as seen in the mirrored waters off Java Head upon one never-to-be-forgotten night.

The few weeks that remained to them before the influx of summer visitors began were made use of by the Lawrences in becoming acquainted with their tenants, and inspecting their vast landed estate, as it was their wish to do something for the welfare of every family on the broad domain. This pleasant task was accomplished after many charming gallops over hills and dales, and in the daily course of their rides many a reminiscence of her girlhood was awakened in the memory of Lady Lawrence, exquisite tidbits with which to enchant a lover's ear.

Every hedge and hill, field and farm unbosomed some youthful frolic or memorable incident of her girl life, all of which in their minutest detail possessed a subtle charm for Lawrence, beyond the fate of battle or the destiny of nations. Lucia's five years' absence had wrought a marvelous change in herself, revolutionizing her views of life. Her heart was now filled with aspirations for the good of others. Yet she loved to expatiate upon her vanished girlhood, when she lived free as the wind and frolicsome as a fawn, all of which now seemed so unaccountable even to herself.

"Can you believe it, Charles, the scenes that I have portrayed for you of my unsophisticated childhood seem to have happened but yesterday. Pleasurable pastimes

were then the one glorious object of life. The birds and I were playfellows the whole day long. I catered to them in choicest food, and they sang to me their sweetest songs. The very leaves seemed to vibrate musically at my coming; while the violets, the daisies, and their sister flowers even knew me for their companion."

"Ah, Lucia, now I know where you caught the tender blue which captivated your sailor lover, when he lay wounded on the great flagship at Hong Kong."

"Dearest, that reminds me of one of darling mother's quaint sayings while out in the fields, when she wished to be left in quiet with her sketching, 'Lucia, go whisper a story to the daisies, and they will answer you back in kind with a prettier tale than you can invent, if your small ears are alert to catch their floral tattle. Go peep into the faces of the violets, with their modest downcast heads, for there is a tenderness in their azure luster which your pretty eyes have not yet acquired.'"

"What a charming woman Lady Maud must have been. Since I have learned some of her pleasing characteristics, I can trace many of the noble qualities of the mother in the daughter, and I fain would believe that a child's best mental acquisitions are oftenest imparted by the mother."

"I, too, love to think so. Though the best years of my life have been spent in close companionship with my father, the statesman, scholar, and philanthropist, who ever sought to impart the great precepts of life in language fitted to my understanding, yet I know that many of the subtle, delicate mental qualities with which

I am endowed were imparted by the all-hallowed mother mind."

"But I have interrupted your pleasing reflections about your girlhood. Tell me more, for such juvenile revelations from one we love have an exquisite charm. I had a brief boyhood like other lads, but my fifteen years of eventful sea-life have dimmed the recollections of my youth, and left the girl-life of a budding maiden a sealed book to me. Could you tell me the inner life of a star, or the juvenile life of an angel, you would not delve into a more profound mystery to a toiler of the sea than the exquisite sanctuary of a pure maiden's heart in the budding days of springtime."

"I hope you will not tire of the daily exhibition of my present inner life, darling, because in baring my soul to you I disclose your own reflection mirrored on its sacred vellum everywhere."

"Commend me to a beautiful woman for finding ways and means to compel a man to believe she loves him, so I promise not to be offended should I observe some slight return of my affection."

"Oh, you rogue, you are putting witticisms upon me. But I was thinking how everything and everybody seemed to have grown old as by a century during my absence. Even the birds do not sing wholly to me as of old."

"Such a change is naturally acquired while enlarging the scope of our observation by travel. In our youth we seem the center of the universe, and all things seem made for our pastime."

"It must be so. These moss-grown rocks and the

gnarled oaks seem older, yet they cannot have aged a particle since I romped among them with my pet lamb and dog Fido."

"These are natural reflections, and they bring a glimpse of my own boyhood thoughts after returning from a voyage."

"I once thought life was a long, long period. Now, everybody and all things seem to be hastening to the grave. Since you snatched me from death, I must confess that the hour of dissolution seems ever drawing near."

"Yes, your sad experience was seared into memory. The scene on the wreck remains a terrible nightmare, which will haunt us our whole lives long. It is in itself an element of dissolution, deleterious to health, and must be avoided in every possible way, especially in your present condition."

"True, dear love, I know you are right, and I wish you would impress father with this view of the case, as he loves to dwell upon those events much too often for his good or for ours."

"This matter of the seeming proximity of death is an idle fear, and should be lived down; for to harbor it is to hasten its coming."

"Out of the reflection that life is but a span, there comes another; that our brief stay on earth should be employed doing good to others, and thereby making a good record for ourselves."

"Nowhere in life are good works so much called for as on a great estate like this, where duties are enshrined as pleasures, more beneficent than ruling a kingdom."

"I am glad you think so, dearest. I have dear

mother's example before me. Though it did not greatly impress me in the romping days of girlhood, it now accompanies her spiritual presence everywhere, and prompts me to find daily occupation in comforting the poor and lowly. I am so glad to find a co-worker in my noble husband."

"Yes, my little wife may count on my support in all such matters. This reminds me that I wish to turn my Aloata investment into a charity fund. It is my intention to invest some portion of it in suitable dowers for our young married tenants. That pretty maiden who is to be married to-morrow shall be dowered with a thousand dollars; and I leave you to manage it in some delicate way of your own. I wish to make the gift to the lass, instead of to the lover, as it will serve to create in him a respect for his dowered wife. And then, Lucia, I would perpetuate your own heroic example in marrying one so much beneath you."

"Oh, you naughty boy! But your plan is a delightful one. The lass, Leroy, is as deserving as she is pretty. It will make the young bride so happy to start in life with such a dower. As I have prepared several useful domestic gifts for the girl, the dower had best come from you; for I would that our people about the castle should know my precious husband as I know him."

Thus the happy June weeks passed swiftly, in occupations that served to chasten the heart and ennoble the mind above the petty frivolities of life. But the time approached when they would be called upon to devote the best part of their time to the onerous hospitalities becoming their rank and estate.

Before Lady Lawrence rendered the charge of her estate to her husband, with a loving woman's tact, she prompted Sir Charles to invite some of the leading minds among her country's statesmen and literati to visit Moorland Castle, as a means of making endurable the presence of several boorish country squires, whom custom would compel them to receive a few weeks each coming season.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

LIFE AT MOORLAND.

IT was five years subsequent to events related in previous chapters when the writer made his first visit to London, and, afterwards, to Moorland Castle, at the urgent request of his old shipmate, Lawrence, while last in America.

Sir Charles and Lady Lawrence came over to attend the brilliant wedding of his adopted sister, pretty Nellie Lawrence of Fleetwing fame; also to adjust the business of his last voyage, which had been so abruptly broken off at his abduction by the pirate queen; and to purchase a more commodious estate and settle it upon his mother and sisters, who could not be induced to take up their abode in England.

Father Lawrence, Nellie, and her husband took passage with them on their return in the Baltic; the bride and groom going to spend their honeymoon at Moorland Castle. It was a gratifying reunion for the Boston Lawrences, who could never forget at what peril their lives had been saved from the wreck on St. Paul's rock, in the middle of the Atlantic; a thrilling account of which was related to the goodly company of nobles convened at the Castle.

Sir Charles continued to address sister Nellie by the fraternal title which she had so loved from the first momentous days of their acquaintance. Doubtless,

Nellie was greatly disappointed at the marriage of her adopted brother; but endeavored to make the best of it, by accepting the most favored of her numerous admirers, a Boston lawyer, with whom Sir Charles was so pleased that he made him the confidential agent of his numerous large interests in American investments.

This business connection subsequently necessitated other yearly interviews, upon which occasions Nellie usually accompanied her husband to England. During their honeymoon, Lady Lawrence opened her heart and her home to the newly wedded pair, giving a warm reception to the beautiful girl-wife, as she rightfully deemed that Nellie had as good cause for gratitude to Sir Charles as herself.

As springtime buds blossom in their season, so the vernal hopes of youth fructify in due time; thus the beautiful family of Sir Charles Lawrence had developed about their handsome parents before our arrival. It was in these happy after years that the charming couple related the tragic events of their lives and loves, which happened after the Fleetwing sailed from Hong Kong, and which we have endeavored to transcribe with a faithful pen.

The year in which the Lawrences arrived home in the Sea Queen, Lady Lucia purposely tarried at her town-house long after the usual time of exodus from London. She waited for the season to advance, that her husband might see her ancestral home at its best. Also wishing for him to be invested with the promised reward of Knighthood, and to have full opportunity to enjoy the enthusiastic éclat aroused by his heroism.

During the winter of their arrival, fashionable society in the metropolis was unusually brilliant. Yet the coming of the shipwrecked Earl and his beautiful daughter, together with the darling Captain who had rescued them at the peril of his life, served to impart an added luster to the notable season.

The bridal pair at once became the coveted accession in every aristocratic assemblage in London. Their romantic loves had from the first created an unusual interest; but when this announcement was quickly followed by the heart-rending news of the wreck of the Greyhound, with the loss of the English Ambassador and his daughter, the whole community was shocked, and the numerous relatives were precipitated into mourning.

Then followed news of the unprecedented rescue of the Seymours by Lady Lucia's lover, which aroused the most extravagant interest throughout the commercial world. Thus, when the wrecked ones came to London, Captain Lawrence at once became the hero of the day, and was everywhere greeted with a more general expression of courtesy than he received at Hong Kong or Singapore.

Never for a moment was he made to feel the want of rank or title, — even before he was knighted; and certainly not after his reception at court, where he received his well-merited title from the hands of the queen, who thus stamped her royal approbation with a meed of nobility ever respected by the peers of her realm.

There was a notable gathering at Windsor Castle when Victoria convened her court to give audience to

the great Duke of Somerset, and the consanguineous families of St. Clare, Seymour, and Montford, for the purpose of conferring the Knight's Grand Cross of the Bath upon the young hero of Greyhound fame.

It was a proud day for the noble sailor when he stood listening to the flattering commendation of England's queen, as she bade her young nobles to pattern after such self-sacrificing heroism; a courage which defied the fierce breakers wherein many another had died, while attempting that which only his genius could accomplish.

It was also most gratifying when the Lord High Admiral subsequently congratulated the brave seaman upon his unprecedented act; which was succeeded by greetings from the whole concourse of nobles, who, one by one, came forward and grasped the hand of Sir Charles Lawrence, and welcomed him to their guild of nobility.

Most gratifying of all was the final scene, where the grand old Earl of St. Clare came forward and, in the presence of the assembled court, folded the young hero to his breast; while with tear-choked voice he proclaimed Lawrence the savior of himself and the last scion of the line of Seymours. Who can wonder that there was not a dry eye in all that distinguished assemblage of fair women and noble men — from Victoria herself to the most arrogant peer in her presence?

Those curious to behold the ingenious craft contrived by Lawrence, by which he and Raiatea reached the wreck, will find the Raiatea in the British Museum. While the precious little Prata, on which Lady Lucia was saved, is sacredly inclosed in plate-glass, and occu-

pies an honored place in the gallery of paintings, being the dearest heirloom belonging to the family.

Raiatea is still the happy valet of his grateful master, and is as much loved by the old Earl as ever. The brave act of the Tahitian received due acknowledgment, with a gold medal from the Admiralty; and his timely services can never be forgotten by the Seymours and Lawrences.

Good old Uncle Joe Bailey willingly gave up his New Bedford home, together with the lowly pulpit where he frequently taught his grotesque version of the gospel to his benighted brethren, and returned with the Lawrences to live to the end of his days. The pious old whaleman loved the young Captain and his charming lady above all others.

It is safe to say that the life of the decrepit old sailor was greatly rejuvenated by daily contact with the merry children at the Castle, as we have the word of the lisping boy George, that "Unke Doe be de greatest man in de 'hole world, — bigger den Sinbad de Sailor, — an' he telded de best stowies 'bout de Lawd, an' little Jesus, an' big whales, an' lots of udder tings. Why! Unke Baily kilded Moce Dick, de mad whale; an' he chopped off de head of dat ole piwate king, what tried to kill my papa."

This seemed to be unimpeachable authority, as the young scion was much too lovable and handsome for one to doubt his integrity on such an ambiguous question. Certain it is that there is nothing too good in the palatial home at Moorland for the meek old man, whose cunning hand saved Lawrence from the uplifted sword of Ching Along.

Though Joe Bailey is black as Erebus — son of Night — and shriveled as a mummy from the Egyptian tombs, there is ever a well-spring of divinest joy springing forth from his aged heart; a broad, glad gospel, as solacing and sweet as a bird song.

When among the children of Lady Lawrence, Uncle Joe, the story-teller, is loved as an idol, and revered as a god. Being the only black man they ever saw his aged face was awe-inspiring to the juveniles, and they failed not to enshrine him in a more exalted niche than mere white men were thought worthy of. The charming creatures were keen enough to scent the goodness of heart, and nobility of soul, beneath the black parchment which had tanned in every clime and sea in the universe.

Though Sir Michael Seymour had left the sea and settled upon a fine estate in a neighboring county, it was a childless home. Therefore the best part of the old Admiral's time was spent at the Castle. Though Sir Charles and Lady Lawrence ever extended the warmest tributes of affection to the aged seaman — their avowed match-maker — seeking to induce him to leave his bachelor's quarters and live with them, it was not until they named their first-born, George Michael, that they captured the old sea-dog and induced him to "let go his best bower" in their midst.

It was easy to see that this small item had an undue influence upon the old hero, for it withheld him ever after from accepting office at the Admiralty, where his judgment was greatly respected. Thereafter Moorland yacht-house was the place where Sir Michael and the juvenile Georgie were most often found — when the

latter was not with Uncle Joe. The Admiral loves to teach his small pupil how to sail the yacht Aloata over the blue water of the crystal mere; or sitting in the pretty club-house, the two cronies may be found whittling out their miniature ships — sufficient occupation and excuse for their being together, two glorious, jolly boys of an undistinguishable age.

Though the oldest daughter was appropriately named Lady Maud, after the revered grandmother, there is a second little midget, who, though she may never become the pirate queen of Gular, is, nevertheless, named Aloata, after that beautiful Spanish celebrity. This, too, at the special request of the young mother upon the instant she saw the snapping black eyes of the new-born girl.

It is said that Sir Charles submitted to the name with some little show of hesitation; probably under the superstition that no other possible influence than that of the hovering spirit of the arrogant queen could have imparted such sloey orbs to their babe; for in every other respect the little Aloata is a blonde as beautiful as her mother. This singular birth-mark seemed to the parents positive evidence that the enamored queen still kept her troth-plight to the man she loved, as when, with port-fire in hand ready to explode the magazine, she promised to be his guardian spirit, —

"Good-by! dearest and best of men. The blue heavens await me! Watch for my coming in the silent night and solemn moments of prayer. In times of deepest sorrow and supremest joy — when supernatural aid is most desired — Aloata will ever be at your side."

Never from that moment was Aloata's name left unsaid

in the prayers of the mother of that child. She prayed God to deal kindly with the hovering spirit of the dead queen, who had providentially been the means of saving her father and herself from starvation, by liberating Lawrence from the terrible death prepared for herself, because of her intense, ennobling love for the man.

It is not too much to infer that, as the young mother believed Aloata's spiritual influence had impressed the child, she also had faith that the queen's benign spirit would continue to watch over her namesake, as well as the parents of the babe. While this may be deemed superstition, to the awed young parents it served only to augment their love for the child and each other, without imparting a touch of jealousy; as was evinced by their joint prayers for the noble queen, who, years after her death, had thus given visible evidence of her enduring affection.

From the day of little Aloata's birth a thousand dollars a month had been invested from the Aloata Fund for the namesake of the queen. Though Sir Charles professed to love Maud, his second-born, the best, yet often in moments of sly merriment Lady Lawrence playfully asserted that this was all put on for propriety's sake. Insisting pleasantly that, as the beautiful queen was his last conquest, she ought necessarily to be his best love; but ever ending with the frank confession that neither her husband nor herself could be blamed for over-loving their little black-eyed minx, as the singularity of her beauty, together with the mystery connected with it, made her the admiration of all.

Here we leave them, with a life of rare promise and abundant opportunities for works of beneficence before them, which they are sure to fulfill with a willing hand. With their minds broadened and matured by extensive travel, which serves to increase the mental grasp upon all topics of daily life, these two radiant souls seem endowed with unusual capabilities for enjoyment.

Their world-wide experience of peril and pleasure not only rendered them sufficient unto themselves in all the daily requisitions of companionship, but it also enabled them to impart much rare pleasure to others who yearly took part in the charming social gatherings at Moorland Castle.

Never shall we forget the happy months spent with our old-time shipmate and friend. The refined atmosphere of Christian fervor which pervaded the family, the intellectual discussions of all the great topics of life, literature, and religion, comprised a social scene of domestic affection and contentment rarely vouchsafed to mortals. A charmed circle such as we have never found elsewhere save in the romantic pages of story. A cheerful, restful example of life that has gone far to help us totter meekly down the declivity of years.

Surely, whom the Lord loveth most He chasteneth in youth, that, becoming wise before their time, they may receive their just recompense thereby, and witness thereof to all the world with their joy.

FINIS.

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